



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

COPYRIGHT AND USE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis must be used in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Reproduction of material protected by copyright may be an infringement of copyright and copyright owners may be entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

Section 51 (2) of the Copyright Act permits an authorized officer of a university library or archives to provide a copy (by communication or otherwise) of an unpublished thesis kept in the library or archives, to a person who satisfies the authorized officer that he or she requires the reproduction for the purposes of research or study.

The Copyright Act grants the creator of a work a number of moral rights, specifically the right of attribution, the right against false attribution and the right of integrity.

You may infringe the author's moral rights if you:

- fail to acknowledge the author of this thesis if you quote sections from the work
- attribute this thesis to another author
- subject this thesis to derogatory treatment which may prejudice the author's reputation

For further information contact the University's Copyright Service.

sydney.edu.au/copyright



Why this text? Why now?

**A Case Study Involving Four NSW
Stage 5 English Teachers**

Giovanni Piccolo

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Sydney

May 2014



AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

- I. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy Degree
- II. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used
- III. the thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree
- IV. no part of this work has been used for the award of another degree
- V. this thesis meets the *University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of research.*

Signature:

Name: Giovanni Piccolo

Date: 3/3/2014

Abstract

This study investigates the factors that influence English teachers' selection of texts for implementation in Stage 5 (Years 9-10) English classrooms in New South Wales (NSW) secondary schools. The stated aim of the current NSW Stage 4-5 English Syllabus (2004) is to "enable students to use, understand, appreciate, reflect on and enjoy the English language in a variety of texts and to shape meaning in ways that are imaginative, interpretive, critical and powerful" (p.12). While the Syllabus requires the study of prose fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry, media, multimedia and film, along with the experience of Shakespeare in Stage 5, it does not prescribe specific titles for use in the classroom. Therefore, the selection of texts is dependent on English teachers' choices as part of planning and programming to address the aim and associated content of the Syllabus.

The purpose of the present research was to examine the range of factors, assumptions and principles that inform teacher selection of texts for classroom study. A series of case studies involving four NSW English teachers currently teaching Stage 5 was structured around a series of qualitative interviews with each teacher. The data from these interviews were analysed and interpreted as narratives of selection aimed at highlighting the main literary and pedagogical theories impacting on each teacher's text selection process. The significant findings of the research identify key factors that influence teachers' selection of texts in Stage 5 English. Specifically: faculty policy; availability of texts; teachers' knowledge of a text; class ability; teachers' guiding theoretical assumptions; and the individual teacher's own value judgments and beliefs about a text's worth, appropriateness and suitability for the particular class they are teaching.

Although the findings of this research are not generalisable, they serve to illuminate a range of significant factors that shape the quality and nature of textual experiences in secondary English classrooms. The insights emerging from this study indicate a need for a more extensive and systematic focus on supporting teacher professional learning for improved practice and optimal student experience and outcomes in secondary English education.

Acknowledgements

There are several people I would like to thank for their assistance and support with this research.

Firstly I would like to thank the teachers Michael, David, Anna and Troy for their willingness to participate in this research and for their openness and honesty.

Thanks to my wife Priscilla who has supported me – in good times and bad – throughout this experience. Without her constant encouragement and patient presence, this at times challenging research would not have been completed.

Finally I would also like to thank Associate Professor Jacqueline Manuel for her patient support, her encouragement, and her vast knowledge and experience. I couldn't have wished for a better mentor. Thank you.

Definition of Key Terms

Aesthetics: In this study, aesthetics refers to the study and understanding of, beauty, taste and value, particularly in Literature.

Alternative Readings: Interpretations of a text differing from the most commonly held or traditional interpretations. For example, Ursula Le Guin's *Tehanu* (recommended by the Board of Studies for Stage 5) is usually read as a novel about vulnerability and the difficulties experienced by victims of extraordinary violence, and how these difficulties must be faced at a deep personal level. However another possible reading is a gendered reading in which Earthsea's male dominated hierarchy is finally (after three novels) shown for what it is, highlighted in the fact that salvation in the end is only achieved through a young girl's link with ancient powers.

Context: "The range of personal, social, historical, cultural and workplace conditions in which a text is responded to and composed." (Board of Studies, 2003, p.67). Recognising the impact context has on the two separate moments of composition and response is crucial, as the two may be greatly separated both in time and place.

Culture: "The social practices of a particular people or group, including shared beliefs, values, knowledge, customs and lifestyle." (Board of Studies, 2003, p.68).

Curriculum: All the planned learning opportunities offered to learners and the experiences learners encounter when these opportunities are implemented (Print, 1993). This definition is significant as it includes two fundamental aspects: What is planned outside a classroom context (Pre-Active Curriculum) and what is actually experienced in the classroom (Interactive Curriculum) (Goodson, 2005). Many classroom learning experiences stem from the interaction of these two aspects of the Curriculum, which must be defined in this dual nature.

Factors Influencing/Guiding/Limiting Text Selection: These include such things as class ability level, gender differences, teacher knowledge of text, author, length of text, positioning of text within the literary canon, existence of a film version of the text, country of origin of the text, reading matter covered, student choice, age of students, access to teaching resources, availability of text, syllabus requirements, school tradition, faculty guidelines, personal value judgment of text, country of origin of text, censorship issues, student familiarity with topic or genre, limited teaching timeframe, and assessment schedules.

Imaginative Text: “A text that represents ideas, feelings and mental images in words or visual images. An imaginative text might use metaphor to translate ideas and feelings into a medium that can be communicated effectively to an audience. Imaginative texts also make new connections between established ideas or widely recognised experiences in order to create new ideas and images. Imaginative texts are characterised by originality, freshness and insight.” (Board of Studies, 2003, p.68).

Instructional Material: All texts used to achieve course outcomes, including text-books, Literature, audio-visual resources, stimulus materials, internet, and multimedia.

Literary Canon: Group of literary works that are considered as being the most important by a specific group of people at a particular time and place, which influence all subsequent works. Generally used when referring to “The Classics”.

Literature: In the present thesis, the term encompasses the following types of texts: Novels, short stories, poetry, drama including Shakespeare, non-fiction including diaries and biographies, and film. This definition matches the mandated text-types for Stage 5 as outlined in the syllabus.

Stage 5: Indicates the 3rd and 4th years of Secondary school in NSW: Year 9 and Year 10. As students move into this stage, the texts they interact with become increasingly sophisticated.

Subject English: A key learning area of the school based curriculum.

Syllabus: Document outlining the educational aims of an area of study, including objectives, outcomes, mandated content and assessment guidelines.

Teacher Comfort: The concept of limiting oneself to constantly teaching the same texts year after year, because of teacher familiarity with a given text.

Texts: “Communications of meaning produced in any medium that incorporates language, including sound, print, film, electronic and multimedia representations. Texts include written, spoken, nonverbal or visual communications of meaning. They may be extended unified works or series of related pieces.” (Board of Studies, 2003, p.71).

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Definitions of Terms	vi
List of Tables and Figures	xviii
Chapter 1 – Introduction to the research	1
1.1 Brief Overview – What is the Study About?	1
1.2 A Historical Perspective on English Curriculum Development	2
1.2.1 The Origins of Subject English	2
1.2.2 English as the Central Humanising Subject	3
1.2.3The Newbolt Report	5
1.2.4 The Recent Years	6
1.3 Research Aims and Purpose	8
1.4 Subject English in New South Wales	12
1.5 Significance, Scope and Limitations of the Research	15
1.5.1 Teacher Participants	17
1.6 Context of the Research: The National Curriculum and Aesthetics of Literature	17

1.7 Methodological Approach: Justifying the Case Study	21
1.8 Overview of Chapters	23
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	26
2.1 Versions of Subject English	26
2.1.1 Cox's Five Models of English	27
2.2.2 Research Applied to Classroom Practice	31
2.2 From Models of English to Teacher Descriptions	33
2.2.1 The Old Grammarians	36
2.2.2 The Pragmatists	38
2.2.3 The Liberals	39
2.2.4 The Technicians	40
2.2.5 The Critical Dissenters	42
2.2.6 Relevance of Teacher Descriptions in Classroom Practice	43
2.3 Theoretical Models Informing the NSW 7-10 English Syllabuses	44
2.3.1 The 1971 New South Wales English Syllabus for Forms I-IV	45
2.3.2 The 1987 New South Wales English Syllabus for Forms I-IV	48
2.3.3 The 2004 New South Wales English Syllabus for Stage 4-5	51
2.4 Understanding Teenagers' Reading and the Role of Teacher-Selected Texts	55
2.5 Factors Influencing Selection of Texts	62
2.6 A Model for Selecting Texts	64

2.7 Teacher Curriculum Decision Making	66
Chapter 3 – Methodology	68
3.1 Introduction	68
3.1.1 The Research Questions	68
3.2 Why a Case Study?	69
3.2.1 Context and Participant Empowerment	70
3.3 The Subjective Nature of Teacher Stories and Narrative Interpretation	71
3.4 Assumptions and theory guiding the analysis and interpretation of the data	73
3.4.1 Why a Narrative	75
3.4.2 Analysis of Narrative Vs Narrative Analysis	77
3.4.3 Writing the Narratives	80
3.5 Collecting and Analysing Data	80
3.5.1 Establishing Contact and Choosing Teachers/Participants	80
3.5.2 Participant Schools	82
3.5.3 Participant Teachers: Michael; David; Anna; Troy	83
3.5.4 Research Participant Sample Summary	84
3.5.5 Recording Process	84
3.5.6 Interviews	85
3.5.7 Research Logs	89
3.5.8 Recording Descriptions/Analysis	89
3.6 Ethical Considerations	90
3.6.1 Ethics	90
3.6.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality	91

3.6.3 Validity and Transferability	91
3.7 Limitations of the Study	92
3.7.1 Limited Perspective	92
3.7.2 Non-Generalisable	93
3.8 Conclusion	93
Chapter 4 – First Interview	97
4.1 The Narratives	97
4.2 The Interview	98
4.3 Michael’s First Interview Part 1	100
4.3.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement	100
4.3.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School A	101
4.4 Michael’s First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection	104
4.4.1 Discussion	109
4.5 David’s First Interview Part 1	111
4.5.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement	111
4.5.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School B	113
4.6 David’s First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection	115
4.6.1 Discussion	122

4.7 Anna's First Interview Part 1	124
4.7.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement	124
4.7.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School C	127
4.8 Anna's First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection	129
4.8.1 Discussion	133
4.09 Troy's First Interview Part 1	134
4.9.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement	134
4.9.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School D	136
4.10 Troy's First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection	137
4.10.1 Discussion	145
Chapter 5 – Second Interview	148
5.1 The Interview	148
5.2 Michael's Second Interview Part 1	151
5.2.1 General factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection	151
5.3 Michael's Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection	154
5.3.1 Discussion	160
5.4 David's Second Interview Part 1	164
5.2.1 General factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection	164
5.5 David's Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection	166

5.5.1 Discussion	175
5.6 Anna's Second Interview Part 1	178
5.6.1 General factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection	178
5.7 Anna's Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection	181
5.7.1 Discussion	188
5.8 Troy's Second Interview Part 1	191
5.8.1 General factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection	191
5.9 Troy's Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection	194
5.9.1 Discussion	203
Chapter 6 – Third Interview	208
6.1 The Interview	208
6.2 Michael's Third Interview Part 1	210
6.2.1 Development of Initial Impressions and General Commentary	211
6.2.2 Changes in Teaching Context	213
6.3 Michael's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection	214
6.4 David's Third Interview Part 1	220
6.4.1 Development of Initial Impressions and General Commentary	220
6.4.2 Changes in Teaching Context	221

6.5 David's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection	222
6.6 Anna's Third Interview Part 1	229
6.6.1 Development of Initial Impressions and General Commentary	229
6.6.2 Changes in Teaching Context	232
6.7 Anna's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection	234
6.8 Troy's Third Interview Part 1	241
6.8.1 Development of Initial Impressions and General Selection	241
6.8.2 Changes in Teaching Context	243
6.9 Troy's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection	244
6.10 Comment on Third Interview	254
Chapter 7 – Conclusion	256
7.1 Impact of the Research on Participants	256
7.2 Factors Guiding the Selection of Texts for NSW Stage 5 English	258
7.2.1 Most Prominent Models of English	258
7.2.2 Main Factors Influencing and Limiting the Selection of Texts	260
7.2.3 Limiting Factors	261
7.2.4 Guiding Factors	265
7.3 Final Statements	269
7.3.1 Recommendations for Future Research.....	270

Bibliography.....	272
--------------------------	------------

Appendix A – Ethics	293
----------------------------------	------------

University of Sydney HREC	294
---------------------------------	-----

SERAP Approval Letter	295
-----------------------------	-----

CEO Ethics Approval Letter	296
----------------------------------	-----

Appendix B – Participant Information and Consent	297
---	------------

Participant Information Letter	298
--------------------------------------	-----

Participant Consent Form	301
--------------------------------	-----

Appendix C – Interview Notes and Guidelines	303
--	------------

Interview 1	304
-------------------	-----

Interview 2	306
-------------------	-----

Michael Interview 3 Notes	307
---------------------------------	-----

David Interview 3 Notes	308
-------------------------------	-----

Anna Interview 3 Notes	310
------------------------------	-----

Troy Interview 3 Notes	312
------------------------------	-----

List of Figures and Tables

Fig 1.1	Time Spent on Each Subject in Stages 1-3	12
Table 2.1	Classification of Teachers in Sample	35
Table 3.1	Participant Schools	82
Fig 3.1	Teaching Cycle	87
Table 3.2	Interview Schedule	88
Table 4.1	Overview of the Process of Narrative Construction	97
Figure 6.1	Summary of Teacher's Position	254
Table 7.1	Limiting and Guiding Factors	261

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Research

1.1 Brief Overview – What is the Study About?

Subject English has long been a contested site within the school curriculum (Belsey, 1980; Jones, 1999; Bailey, 2000). Debates about the theoretical foundations, the pedagogy and content of the subject continue to occupy the research literature and scholarship in the field, and reach out into public debates about what ought to be the foundations of the subject. Interestingly, if one were to look back on the history of the English curriculum in Australia and England, the present key debates all have their parallels a century ago. (Beavis, 2003).

At the very centre of this debate is the difficulty in defining the characteristics of a text, and the role of the teacher and learner in approaching literature. The differences in these definitional stances have a great influence on English teachers' *modus operandi* with regards to a central aspect of their professional practice: the selection of texts for their students. Protherough (1983) states that “there are reasons to be pessimistic about the way in which the selection process is carried out in schools” (p.148), and although the present research does not necessarily agree with this statement, it does highlight the quintessential importance of understanding this multilayered process of text selection in English.

Selecting texts appropriate to the needs, interests and abilities of students whilst also meeting the Syllabus requirements is a difficult endeavour, more so because of the apparent lack of a “shared common conviction” (p.148) about what texts constitute the exemplars of quality literature, which was a guiding factor for teachers in the past. Add to this the ever-increasing budget restraints faced by teachers and English faculties today, as well as the accelerating growth of both technological development and socio-cultural

metamorphosis, and the situation faced by teachers must be recognised as extremely difficult. Thus the present thesis is aimed at shedding further light on how and why English teachers come to make the choices which define the experience of subject English for their students.

1.2 A Historical Perspective on English Curriculum Development

‘English’ as a school and university subject is – historically speaking – quite recent. In England, the very cradle of English language and literature, English was overwhelmingly dismissed by the majority of educational institutions from their establishment through to the beginning of the 20th Century. If one stops to consider this in light of the central role of subject English in the current curricula of Anglophone nations such as England, the United States of America and Australia, the question of how such a shift took place becomes prominent in any study wishing to establish the *whys* and *hows* of the subject’s evolution.

1.2.1 The Origins of Subject English

The genesis of subject English began late in 18th Century England, where it assumed the form of basic literacy teaching in the nation’s primary schools and Mechanics’ Institutes (Mathieson, 1975). Here students would learn the basics of writing and reading, which was generally Biblical in nature. The true patrons of culture, namely the Ancient Universities and the Public and Grammar schools continued to ignore English, to some extent in response to the subject’s connection with working class education, industrialism and manual labour, but primarily due to their confidence in the “superior humanism of the classics” (Mathieson, 1975. p.17), which supposedly put “a person into the possession of all the inherited wisdom of the ages” (Connell, 1950, p.188, quoting M. Arnold).

Something that must not be either forgotten or undervalued is the fact that another very strong resistance to the inclusion of English as a valued academic subject was the fact that apart from its threat to the classics, it was very much deemed to be a female oriented subject rather than a male one during the mid to late 19th Century (Griffith 2013 and others). As women began to enter the universities in Britain from the 1860s onwards, subjects began to acquire gender aspects, with English and Geography for example considered appropriate for women with Latin and Law being more suited for men. This gendered vision of the study literature was a significant obstacle and an important shaping influence on the inclusion and development of subject English in its early stages in Britain. Nevertheless the educational crisis that almost a century later brought about the recommendations of the Newbolt Report was already discernible in the first half of the 19th Century. In her seminal work *The Preachers of Culture* Mathieson quotes a contributor to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1830 who describes the supposed student of the classics as never having read any Herodotus, Thucydides, Tacitus, or any of the great classical masters; nor any Greek tragedies or comedies, and goes as far as stating that “the very names of logical, moral or political science are unknown to him” (p.18). Thus, the supposed humanising and morally educative nature of the Classics was called into question. In fact, study of the Classics to a large extent involved the rote learning of passages in Latin and Greek and endless exercises in translation simply for the sake of translation, with little time dedicated to analysing and appreciating the beauty of the composition. The inherent difficulties faced by the majority of students when approaching Greek and Latin texts precluded the enjoyment of the texts themselves, and obviated the very reason the texts were being studied in the first place.

1.2.2 English as the Central Humanising Subject

The growing dissatisfaction with the study of the Classics, together with the developing effects of the Industrial Revolution (which was bringing science to pre-eminence

in society) and the increasing numbers of students entering the education system gave rise to a new educational debate. It was simply not enough to do away with the study of the Classics and leave such a gaping chasm in the curriculum. Already in the 19th Century there was a consensus that the new curriculum needed a central, humanising and morally educative subject, around which all other learning would cohere. Although there was agreement about the need for this pivotal central subject, there were differing opinions as to what should fill the void left by the Classics' demise. The two opposing subjects which rose to pre-eminence were the Sciences, defended by such people as Darwin and Huxley, and Literature, the prominent advocates of which were Arnold and Ruskin.

The concept of English as the curriculum's central subject, shaping the characters of students owes a great debt to Matthew Arnold. Competing with the demands of the Sciences as central to the curriculum was no easy task, particularly given the historical period, during which England's technical and industrial inferiority when compared to its rival Germany was becoming obvious to all (Peel, Patterson and Gerlach, 2000). He believed in a general liberal training, with English at its centre, arguing that England was not only behind in the teaching of the physical sciences, but also in incorporating the mother tongue and its literature as a part of the school course, (Arnold, 1964) just as the other nations of Europe had done. He was driven by the conviction that English literature in itself could provide the vital humanising and morally formative encounters which most students failed to experience in their daily struggles with the Classics.

The work of Arnold and his contemporaries enhanced the role and importance of subject English, so that by the beginning of the 20th Century there was an established belief in the power of great literature to humanise, and to protect the masses from the corrupting nature of cheap fiction and newspapers, and lift "pupils above the commercial world's crude sensationalism" (Mathieson, 1975, p.49). Thus from its very beginning subject English was

not envisioned to be about learning literature in the same way as learning the sciences, or mathematics. It inherited far older instructional techniques ultimately aimed at the:

Cultivation of the personality or the character of the child, and around the construction of 'proper conduct'; that is, conduct befitting the citizen of a modern state.

(Peel et al, 2000, p.237)

Consequently, as will be seen, the unique and special role of subject English and the great things the proper teaching of the subject could achieve when compared to the rest of the curriculum became a central focus of one of the defining key documents in the history of the subject: The Newbolt Report.

1.2.3 The Newbolt Report

The Newbolt Report of 1921 played a pivotal role in ushering in the formal period of ascendancy of subject English in the school curriculum (Green, Cormack, 2008). It was the incarnation of the work of the English Association and together with *English for the English* (Sampson, 1921) it successfully established English as the central humanising subject – the corner stone in fact – of the curriculum. It upheld the distinctly Arnoldian idea of the civilising nature of literature, believing in the power of education to transform the future by bridging the vast gap between the classes which had been made evident during the War. The War had highlighted the cultural inferiority of the British working class, and the established differences in the schooling experienced by those educated to learn, versus those educated to earn (Fisher, 1917), particularly when compared to the schools of mainland Europe; especially Germany (Mathieson, 1975).

This sense of cultural inferiority is the palimpsest against which the members of the committee were working. In fact the post war faith in the power of education to create a

liberal culture of self-realisation and aesthetic appreciation available to all through the study of language and literature is present throughout the Newbolt report (Peel et al, 2000). The “introduction of the culture, which had been the possession of the few to everyone” (Selleck, 1982, p.80) had begun.

Most significant to the present research is the fact that it is in this period, through the influence and evolving effects of the Newbolt Report, that the notions of cultural heritage, and perhaps more importantly that of a canon of works, gain greater legitimacy. The Newbolt Report legitimised subject English’s place at the centre of the curriculum, and created the foundations for all future curriculum developments, both in England, and in all Anglophone nations (Mathieson, 1975).

1.2.4 The Recent Years

Knowledge of English curriculum history in England is fundamental to any study concerned with the development of the subject in Australia, and should inform both curriculum writing and implementation, in order to fight what Beavis (2003) calls the “outright a-historicity of these times” (p.9), in which it often seems that the past does not impinge on the present. Mathieson (1975) lamented the ever-present historical ignorance of the English curriculum, believing in the advantages of teachers who knew how the subject they were teaching came to be formed along its present lines. Having looked at the foundation of English in England, it is necessary now to examine its development in Australia, particularly in New South Wales (NSW), where the present study will take place.

As in England, subject English first appeared in the primary school curriculum in Australia and its development into the high school subject of today follows varying paths in each of the six states. For example, the Public School Act of 1866 in NSW, and the Education

Act of 1905 in South Australia which established compulsory primary schooling helped pave the way for the “systematic development of post-primary education” in these states (Cormack, Grant, Karin and Green, 2003).

Peel (2000) looks at the progress of subject English in NSW by analysing the development of the English Teacher Qualifying Exams, which were established in 1885. A close look at these examination papers gives us an insight into the changing nature of the subject. Already in 1885, the term *English* as a unifying concept emerges, differing from the earlier focus on each of the individual activities defined as *reading, writing, poetry, and speaking*. In 1898 the subject is defined as *British Literature*, and it is in 1906, under the direction of Peter Board that the familiar description of *English Language and Literature* appears, together with notes acknowledging the use of reading literature for the sake of its value and content. In these documents, already we can see the presence of the Arnoldian idea of literature (later enshrined in the Newbolt Report) as a “transfiguring agent” (Manuel and Brock, 2003) in the lives of students.

The growing importance of literature within the English curriculum can be seen throughout the first half of the 20th Century. Between 1905 and 1909, under the direction of Peter Board, English had entered the NSW Secondary schooling curriculum, and although the first edition of *Courses for Study in High Schools* in 1911 divided English under the two headings of *Language* (which incorporated such things as spelling and grammar) and *Literature*, already in 1929, the new document does not mention *Language*, dedicating English in its entirety to *Literature*. This situation remained unchanged till the 1944 *Courses for Study in High Schools* which re-established the study of *Language*, which was later pushed aside with the development of “The New English” in Australia in the 1970s (Peel, Patterson and Gerlach, 2000).

What has been outlined above is the central debate which has occupied curriculum experts and researchers since the formalisation of English as a school subject: Language versus Literature. The history of subject English can be to a large extent divided into periods during which one or the other of these two concepts held sway. The Martin Report (Education Department, Western Australia, 1980) commissioned by the Director General of Education in Western Australia, concludes that in general there was no unified conception of English, almost a century after its first appearance in schools.

It is no wonder then that this key debate regarding the competing claims for the place of language and literature as the core of the subject has most recently occurred with reference to the creation of the Australian Curriculum. The first phase of the Australian Curriculum included the implementation of two science subjects, Mathematics and Science, and two humanities subjects, History and English. This decision to prioritize these subjects reflects the historically enduring privileging of these subjects in Australia, and how this balancing act between humanities and the sciences is ever going. In terms of the history of curriculum in NSW, these four subjects were the only four core subjects already in the first curriculum for secondary schools in 1911 (Hughes and Brock, 2008). With regards to English in the Australian Curriculum, at the core of these debates is the question: what are the processes and assumptions that inform the selection and valuing of texts in the secondary classroom? Or more simply: how and why is value assigned to particular texts?

1.3 Research Aims and Purpose

The study deals with how four English teachers select texts for their Stage 5 English classroom, and how they do this in relation to syllabus and faculty guidelines, parental and government requirements, socio-cultural norms, school tradition and school budget restrictions. What are the theoretical, pedagogical and practical assumptions that inform

such valuing and selection of texts, and what are the implications of this when it comes to defining subject English?

What is being investigated is how the question of assigning literary value, worth and significance is addressed in the 'interactive curriculum' – the curriculum that teachers implement in Secondary classrooms (Goodson, 2005; Jackson, 1968). Since pedagogy and content in a classroom stem from the interaction of both 'interactive' and 'pre-active' curriculum moments, this dual nature of the curriculum needs to be understood (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005). Kelly (1999) acknowledges the fact that there is a significant difference between what is originally planned, and what actually happens, between the "ideals and conceptions in the minds of the curriculum planners and the realities" (p.145) taking place in the classroom. This difference between the "intention and the operationalising of the intention" (Smith and Lovat, 2003, p.14), between the pre-active and the interactive curriculum is of particular interest to this study. Although it is useful to examine both the curriculum, and the syllabus requirements in order to begin to understand the process of text selection, this is far from enough. In order to gain a deeper insight into this process, it is necessary to re-enter the classroom, and have teachers themselves expound on the differences between these two curriculum moments.

The research accepts the possibility that a number of significant factors guiding teacher choice in the selection of texts may not be attributable to a teacher's own prerogative. Teacher choice exists but is more often than not guided by factors and agents acting beyond a teacher's sphere of influence (Piccolo, 2009). Texts available in the school book-room; insufficient funds for purchasing new or alternative texts; departmental or faculty control of individual teacher selections; and syllabus requirements may all function to stifle the role of the teacher in selecting the most suitable texts for his or her own classroom. Nevertheless this is not unduly problematic in the context of the present

research aims, as all these non-teacher-controlled factors are an integral part of what the thesis aims at investigating.

Teaching, at any level, can be viewed as a continuous decision-making process (Freeman, 1989; Peterson and Walberg, 1979; Starko, Sparks-Langer, Pasch, Frankes, Gardner, Moody, 2002), in which a teacher – at times consciously, and at other times automatically – evaluates particular variables ranging from the teacher’s own goals for the lesson, to the students’ own ability levels, in order to establish specific *teaching strategies*, and select appropriate *teaching materials* aimed at generating potentially useful teaching situations. Shavelson (1973) goes as far as stating that teaching is basically decision making, claiming that “the basic teaching skill is decision making” (p.144). It is this decision making skill that distinguishes experienced teachers from those just starting out, since these decisions require “complex cognitive processing of available information” (p.149). Experienced and talented teachers are able to apply their decision making skills not only in their planning, but also in action, making thoughtful adaptations while teaching and delivering content (Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy, 2000; Hoffman and Pearson, 2000). This difference between novice teachers and experienced is further expanded by Westerman (1991) who highlights expert teachers’ ability to be thoughtfully adaptive to their students’ needs. Research regarding Teacher Decision Making although present in the literature has been often limited to subject areas such as Mathematics and the Sciences (Floden et al, 1981), or focussed on Elementary school teaching (Griffith, Massey and Atkinson, 2013). Thus research regarding decision making in the field of secondary English is scarce, and when available is very dependent on the research context, as English teacher decision making is always shaped by specific curriculum requirements and therefore not effectively relevant.

In English teaching, particularly in junior Secondary English in NSW (Stages 4 and 5), this decision-making process plays a very important role. By not prescribing texts, but rather

mandating the types of texts to be studied, the English Stage 5 Syllabus potentially empowers the professional, experienced and talented teacher, allowing him/her to participate actively in the implementation of the curriculum in their own classroom to meet the needs, interests and capacities of students.

When reviewing both past and current research on adolescent reading practices and attitudes, and recommended criteria for text selection, there appears to be limited research dealing with teachers' actual selection strategies. There is research aimed at understanding adolescent reading preferences (Whitehead, 1977; Thomson, 1987; Coles, 1995; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Millard, 1997; Reeves, 2001; Manuel and Robinson, 2002; Freedman, 2003), and literature outlining suggested teacher criteria for texts selection (Cope, 1997; Clutter, 1998; Jago, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Opitz and Zbaracki, 2003; Smith, 2003), and although some research has attempted to determine what texts are being selected by teachers for classroom study (Tuft, 2001), aside from Koals (1993), there is little research aimed at discerning the reasons behind such selections.

Therefore the present research is concerned with determining the extent to which English teachers are active participants in selecting the texts they will be using in their own classes. Furthermore since the research shows that the selection of teaching and learning materials and resources tends to determine the learning environment, this selection can no longer be simply based on "common sense and convenience" (Chandler and Sweller, 1991, p.294). It is imperative that we understand the factors guiding and limiting this at times unique decision-making process. English teachers need to be aware of these main factors when selecting texts for their junior Secondary classes, so that by reviewing, adapting and improving these selection strategies ultimately the most suitable text will be taught to the appropriate class employing effective pedagogy.

1.4 Subject English in New South Wales

Schooling in Australia developed in concomitance with the development of the Australian states. Consequently, each state has its own curricula, and develops its own syllabus documents. The present research looks at subject English in NSW, specifically in Stage 5. Schooling in NSW is divided into six separate Stages, with each Stage comprised of two grades. Thus in primary school Stages 1, 2 and 3 include years 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6 respectively, and Stages 4 and 5 indicate the junior high school years from 7 to 10, while the final years of school, year 11 and 12 are designated as Stage 6.

In primary school (Stages 1-3) English is one of the six Key Learning Areas, comprising between 25%-35% of the school week as highlighted in Figure 1.1.

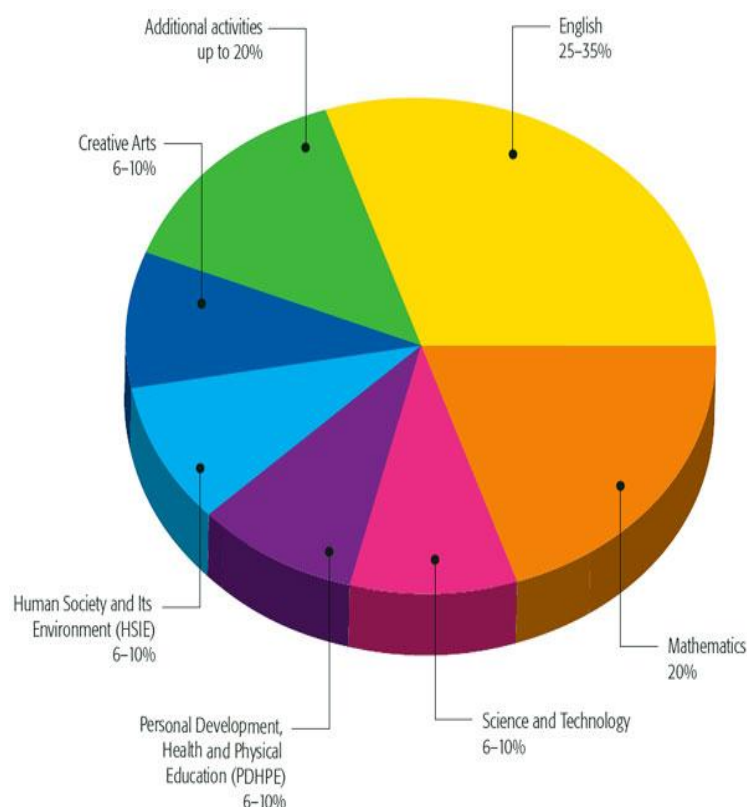


Fig. 1.1 Time spent on each subject in Stages 1-3.

(NSW Board of Studies, 2008)

In the first of these three Stages, students begin to develop reading and comprehension skills, as well as basic spelling and punctuation conventions. Children also begin expressing their own responses to characters in stories, as well as making predictions and inferences when both listening to and reading stories. In Stage 2 students further develop their spelling and punctuation, and begin to read and communicate for different purposes and audiences, as well as learning to use electronic publishing software. Furthermore, in this Stage students begin to look more closely at texts, acknowledging varying viewpoints and meanings, and compose more complex pieces of writing. The last Stage of Primary school has students expressing themselves in more complex forms both orally and in writing, as well as responding to texts using personal experience. In this Stage students encounter novels, poems, technical texts, websites, and other complex texts, making use of a wide range of comprehension strategies when dealing with more challenging ideas and issues (NSW Board of Studies, 2012).

In Stages 4 and 5, the syllabus requires students to engage with, respond to and compose a variety of texts including spoken, print and visual texts. In Stage 5 the study of at least two works of fiction, a variety of poetry, at least two films, and at least two works of non-fiction and drama, as well as a range of other texts is mandatory and must give students experience of:

- 1) A widely defined Australian literature, including texts that give insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia.
- 2) A wide range of literary texts from other countries and times including poetry, drama scripts, prose fiction and picture books.
- 3) Texts written about intercultural experiences.
- 4) Texts that provide insights about the peoples and cultures of Asia.
- 5) Shakespearean drama.
- 6) Everyday and workplace texts.

- 7) A wide range of cultural, social and gender perspectives, popular and youth cultures.
- 8) Texts that include aspects of environmental and social sustainability.
- 9) Nonfiction, picture books, graphic novels.
- 10) An appropriate range of digital texts, including film, media and multimedia.

(Board of Studies NSW, 2012, p.26)

The syllabus document continues by stating that

In selecting specific texts for study in English, teachers should consider the needs, interests and abilities of their students and the ethos of the school and its local community.

(Board of Studies NSW, 2012, p.26)

The NSW Board of Studies also provides supporting documents to help teachers make informed decisions regarding the selection of texts, by providing a vast list of suggested texts (Board of Studies, 2012). Considering these guidelines and the many other factors which guide and influence teachers, the focus question which will need to be answered is: why has this text been selected?

The NSW Stage 4-5 English Syllabus describes the study of English as the use of language in its various textual forms. It highlights the use of complex visual and written texts which must be both challenging and enjoyable, in order to immerse students in increasingly “demanding language experiences” (p.10).

In Stage 5, through their interaction with increasingly sophisticated texts, students develop critical and imaginative faculties, they become confident users of information technology, they develop speaking, listening, reading, writing and representing skills, they begin to challenge information and apply analytical language in solving complex problems. All of the above is achieved through the interaction of students, teacher and the text. In fact

the syllabus specifies that “through responding to and composing a wide range of texts and through the close study of texts, students will develop knowledge, understanding and skills” (p.13) in order to “make meaning through language” (p.22).

Therefore, since all learning begins through the “close” interaction with these texts, it is imperative that we understand the way teachers navigate through these countless possible choices, and select texts they feel to be most appropriate in the given context, as well as discerning what, if anything influences this all-important decision-making process.

1.5 Significance, Scope and Limitations of the Research

Central to this thesis is discerning the factors underpinning and guiding teacher selection of texts. The thesis is not actually dealing with the issues of textual engagement and reading in the first instance. Nor is the thesis directly concerned with matters of student-response, reading pedagogy or writing pedagogy. Nevertheless the research *is* interested in examining teachers’ techniques in assigning value to particular texts and how these value judgments impact on their selection process. More specifically, the research is interested in looking at the processes guiding four NSW English teachers in their selection of texts. Considering that there are more than 110,000 Secondary English teachers in Australia (ABS 2003), it is apparent that since the scope of the case study is somewhat limited by this small sample, the aim of the research is not to make generalised conclusions, or to present generalisable results, but to provide rich and in-depth explorations and descriptions of the observed phenomena. The nature of the case study method precludes generalisability. Instead it is designed to deepen discovery, meaning and understanding, rather than to verify truth or predict outcomes (Myers, 2000). If generalisable at all, it is to theoretical prepositions and not to populations or universes (Yin, 2002).

At present, there is little research investigating the processes of teacher selection of texts. Thus, the case study aims at opening up an area of research into current teacher craft practices that has to a certain extent been under-investigated. The insights gained from a close observation and analysis of the decision making processes informing the selection of texts will allow for future research to build on this foundation, to a much larger and statistically relevant extent, and when possible across all Australian states.

The research looks at the text selection process in Years 9 and 10 in NSW: Stage 5. The rationale behind this focus on Stage 5 is significant. As mentioned above, Secondary schooling in NSW is constituted by three distinct Stages: Stage 4, Stage 5, and Stage 6. Teacher decision making in Stage 6 is limited in the final year by the prescribed text lists for the Higher School Certificate (HSC), and in the Preliminary course by the need to prepare for the coming HSC the following year. Therefore Stage 6 does not lend itself to the aims of the present thesis, as teacher choice in the selection of texts is externally restricted. Conversely, in Stage 4 and 5 there are no external pressures other than the syllabus guidelines impacting on teacher choice.

In fact in these two Stages there are no prescribed texts for study. Thus, teacher choice although perhaps limited by school availability with regards to longer texts such as novels and some drama, is decidedly unlimited with regards to short imaginative texts, poetry, and film. Of the two stages, Stage 5 is particularly suited to the current research as it is – when compared to Stage 4 – of a more advanced nature, as teachers scaffold towards the higher requirements of the final years of schooling. In Stage 5 teachers are free to choose their own texts for study, and are confronted with students who have already experienced the types of texts they are presenting them with. In Stage 4 students engage with novels, short stories, plays, film, poetry, and everyday texts such as newspaper articles

and magazines, but it is in Stage 5 that a deeper analysis and appreciation of these texts occurs.

1.5.1 Teacher Participants

The rationale behind selecting teachers employed in NSW public schools, Catholic Education Office (CEO) schools and Independent schools for the case study needs to be examined. The research acknowledges that although non-Government schools follow the same core syllabus, external pressures such as religious beliefs and parental or Diocesan censorship issues may limit the scope of texts a teacher can choose for his/her class, and while the research also acknowledges the fact that teachers in public schools may also be confronted with the problem of parental censorship, and be influenced in their selection by external political/philosophical considerations, the added pressures stemming from religious concerns and Diocesan control do not weigh on them. Having said this, one must recognise that since almost 30% (ABS, 2012) of NSW Secondary students attend CEO and Independent schools, these additional factors (religious beliefs and Diocesan censorship) influencing teachers in their selection process are worthy of note and must form an integral aspect of the present research.

Therefore the current research is significant as it aims to establish how and why these selections are made, and how these decisions reflect and address current issues raised in 'adolescent reading' research literature.

1.6 Context of the Research: The National Curriculum and the Aesthetics of Literature

Understanding how and why teachers come to make these selection decisions is particularly pertinent today as Australia moves into implementing a national curriculum

(National English Curriculum: Framing Paper, 2008). This is especially the case since the place of literature is repeatedly expressed in the *Framing Paper* to be of extreme and unique importance. The new NSW English Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2012) itself singles out literature and literary texts as being valued when it includes the study of “widely acknowledged quality literature of past and contemporary societies” (p.10) in its mandatory texts.

What is of particular interest to the present study is the definite attention the new NSW Syllabus pays to the personal, social, cultural and aesthetic value of literary texts. The study of aesthetics is defined in the Syllabus glossary as directly related to the study of literature:

Aesthetic: Relating to a sense of beauty or an appreciation of artistic expression. The selection of texts that are recognised as having aesthetic or artistic value is an important focus of the study of literature.

(Board of Studies NSW, 2012, p.185)

This aesthetic quality of literature is important as it distinguishes the study of literary texts from all others. A student may learn the various features of persuasive language from a print advertisement, or learn to identify the key points in a feature article; he or she may learn the new developing ‘online’ language through the use of websites and social networking sites, and learn to discern the proper place and context for using such language; students may also learn to acknowledge the way perspective and camera angles contribute to the creation of meaning in photographic images, and recognise the way these techniques are used by the media in manipulating the news, and thus establish meaning. Students may learn many varied, useful and educationally valid things through the close

interaction with the aforementioned types of texts, but these forms of reading differ sharply from the reading of literature. The new NSW Syllabus defines Literature as texts “that are highly regarded examples of their forms and media” (p.199). Literature’s uniqueness lies in the way it shapes and imaginatively recreates the vast plethora of human experience through the use of language, defining and exploring the meaning and value of this experience (Thomson, 1987). Reading literature is an aesthetic experience, and literature is a form of art: it is pleasant and springs from the “abundance of life, not the necessities” (Miller, 1980, p.9), fulfilling no urgent personal need, but producing satisfaction, and at times happiness. Literature “awakens echoes...in which each of us can perceive distant reflections of himself and of the human race” (Levi, 2008).

Furthermore, teaching literature is perhaps the only occasion in which students are taught one of the arts at an adult level of appreciation. In schools art and music more often than not focus on performance and production rather than appreciation, while other forms of art such as dance or architecture are often only superficially studied (Miller, 1980). Consequently in this light, the teaching of literature assumes a rather important responsibility, as it provides – for the majority of students – the only choice with regards to an aesthetic educational experience. Literature in this context becomes the most available art form to study, and as such its selection process must be understood more thoroughly than the selection of other types of texts used in the English classroom.

The implementation of the new NSW English Syllabus will by its very nature emphasise the role of the English teacher as a creator of aesthetic value with regards to texts, particularly those of a literary nature. Furthermore in selecting and presenting texts which by definition are to be regarded as having important permanent or artistic value, teachers play an active role in establishing students’ own processes of assigning value to literature.

More recent debates connected with the current implementation of the English Syllabus at the national level attempt to resist the definition and use of Literature as presented with the advent of the Australian Curriculum. Although the Review of the Australian Curriculum (DET, 2014) had not been completed yet during the final stages of the present research, the points raised by Donnelly regarding the range of literary texts that should be included for study are relevant to the current thesis. The review revisits questions about text selection and the criteria for that selection in the broader context of a national curriculum, K-10. The Review presents a clear description of what it refers to as the “tyranny of relevance” (p.169). What is described is a selection criteria in which

what students encounter is often restricted to what is immediate, contemporary and local, and ignored is the fact that literature opens up unexpected and strange worlds and experiences that are often foreign and distant in location and time.

(p.169)

The review advocates for a return to the moral and spiritual dimensions underpinning the study of literature, opposing the view that reading must solely be for enjoyment, stating that “many texts are enlightening without being enjoyable” (p.169), proposing a more attentive focus on appreciation of literature rather than production in the early years of education. These views are expressed in opposition of selection criteria aimed at addressing imposed socio-political concerns that are inimical to the study of literature, and have no “relation to the educational purposes that the curriculum for English, specifically, should be designed to facilitate and fulfil” (p.166).

Nevertheless, the consultation process followed in establishing the Australian Curriculum in NSW was extensive and inclusive including the broad range of stakeholders, as can be seen from the 2012 Consultation Report (Bostes, 2012). The debate centered upon:

- The structure of the Syllabus;
- The integration of content and process;
- Integration of inclusive education;
- Integration of “representation” as one of the language modes.

As important stakeholders, the teachers in NSW confirmed their desire to continue with an outcomes-based model of curriculum, affirming the value of teachers having some freedom in deciding which texts to teach within the mandated categories. The NSW Support Document, *Suggested Texts for the English K-10 Syllabus* (2013) provides guidance for teachers in selecting texts for each stage of the English curriculum (excluding Stage 6). What is of interest with regards to the present thesis is that the decision to allow teachers to continue to make their own choices concerning the selection of texts for their Stage 5 classes gives continued relevance to the present research findings.

Seen in this light, going back into the classroom and listening to the teachers themselves as they expound on how their particular craft knowledge impacts on the practical implementation of the curriculum at the classroom level, on their valuing of particular texts over others, and on the process of text selection is not only desirable but a necessary step in formulating a successful, workable and lasting Australian Curriculum.

1.7 Methodological Approach: Justifying the Case Study

The present research involves the observation and analysis of the relationships between non-manipulated variables – in this case the factors influencing text selection – and

as such falls into the category of *Descriptive Research* (Best, 1981). A case study was found to be the most appropriate way of advancing the understanding of what factors guide teacher choice in the selection of texts for the NSW Stage 5 English classroom.

The research is interested in shedding light on a particular complex issue. It focuses on one instance of teaching practice, and through the case study methodology intends to gain insight from a full and in-depth documentation of this one dimension of teachers' work (Freebody, 2003). By going directly to the teachers themselves, the research recognises that in order to collect responses of a useful and meaningful nature, the phenomenon in question – the *why* and *how* of text selection – needs to be investigated within its real life context (Yin, 1984). Teachers do not practise in a vacuum. Teachers practise to particular learners, in particular places and under particular circumstances, all of which impact actively on the teaching practice itself. In fact the contextual conditions impacting on a teacher's selection process are highly pertinent to the current study. In such a situation, where the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context in which it is being produced are not instantaneously clear, the case study is particularly idoneous (Yin, 2002).

The questions posed by the research are of a 'how?' and 'why?' nature. According to Yin (2002) the case study is the preferred methodological strategy to be employed when these types of *explanatory* questions are posed, as opposed to the *exploratory* questions formulated as 'what?', 'where?' and 'who?' Furthermore the proposed research intends to interview the people directly involved in the phenomenon being observed: their *decision* making process in selecting texts. Schramm (1971) states that this is the very essence of a case study: A case study attempts to illuminate a *decision*, trying to establish why it was taken, how it was implemented, and where it led. This is reflected in the interview schedule, in which three separate interviews were conducted with each teacher to track teacher's responses over a typical teaching and learning cycle, during which decisions were being

made about the selection of texts, these texts were then implemented in class, and lastly there was some evaluation/reflection on the effectiveness of the texts, and the appropriateness of the teacher's selection. The three interviews are intended to capture this teaching continuum from selection through to reflection.

The case study approach lends itself well to the present research project. The case study's inherent "commitment to the overwhelming significance of localised experience" (Freebody, 2003, p.81) enables richer understanding of a complex issue by emphasising the contextual dimensions of events, conditions, and their relationships.

1.8 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter reviews and critiques the significant scholarly literature and research relevant to the present study. The chapter is divided into the following sub-headings:

11) *Versions of Subject English*

This section examines competing and recognised models of English and their presence in the classroom.

12) *From Models of English to Teacher Descriptions*

This section examines five teacher character descriptions deriving from the research literature and the impact these have on classroom practice.

13) *Pedagogical and Theoretical Models informing the NSW Stage 4-5 English Syllabuses*

This section critiques the NSW 1971, 1987 and 2002 English Syllabuses examining the development and implementation of the *Growth Model*, as well as the impact of more recent literary and pedagogical theories.

14) *Understanding Teenagers' Reading and the Role of Teacher-Selected Texts*

This section examines what we currently know about what students read, how they read and when they read, and what effect compulsory school reading has on their attitudes and accomplishments as readers.

15) *Factors Influencing Selection of Texts*

This section critiques the literature dealing with suggested selection strategies for English teachers. It will look at suggested criteria for selecting fiction, drama, non-fiction, poetry, film, multimodal texts and everyday texts. This section addresses the following question: What types of texts are being put forward by the research, and how are teachers being advised? This section considers research that has looked at what texts are actually being taught in the classroom, and why these have been chosen. Of particular importance in this section is a discussion of the role teacher knowledge of a text plays in the selection process, and discerning how factors outside a teacher's own control weigh on this selection process.

16) *A Model for Selecting Texts.*

The final section of the Literature Review presents a five point model for selecting texts.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter outlines the research's methodological approach, detailing the way the case study will be conducted.

Chapter 4 – First Interview

This chapter is based on the transcripts of the first interview with each of the four teachers, and presents their answers in first person narrative form.

Chapter 5 – Second Interview

This chapter presents findings from the transcripts of the second teacher interviews, and narrates the individual interview session of the four teachers involved.

Chapter 6 – Third Interview

This chapter presents the findings of the transcripts of the third teacher interviews, and will narrate the answers of the third individual interview session of the four teachers involved.

Chapter 7 –Conclusion

This chapter will bring together the results examined in the previous chapters and present conclusions based on these results.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Versions of Subject English

The present research deals with the selection of texts for the Stage 5 NSW English classroom. Contextually, it is linked with the development of subject English in Australia and in particular with the curriculum history and syllabus development in NSW. There is a substantial corpus of research in the field of English curriculum history in Australia (cf. Brock 1982; Green and Beavis, 1996; Green and Cormack, 2008; Sawyer, 2003) highlighting the fact that subject English has a complex, well researched and multilayered history which has followed various paths on both sides of the Atlantic and in Australia. Given such a complex background to the research, the Literature Review is structured as follows:

- Cox's Five Models of English
 - o Cox's Models Applied to Classroom Practice

- From Models of English to Teacher Descriptions
 - o Old Grammarians
 - o Pragmatists
 - o Liberals
 - o Technicians
 - o Critical Dissenters

- Pedagogical and Theoretical Models Informing the NSW Years 7-10 English Syllabuses
 - o The 1971 NSW Syllabus for Forms I-IV

- The 1987 NSW Syllabus for Forms I-IV
 - The 2004 NSW Syllabus for Stages 4-5
- Understanding Teenagers' Reading and the Role of Teacher-Selected Texts
 - Factors Influencing Selection of Texts
 - A Model for Selecting Texts

The research recognises that there are contesting versions of subject English. Dixon (1967), Protherough (1983) and Reynolds (1996), for example each highlight three major models of English that have persisted in some form to define the subject: the *Cultural Heritage* model; the *Skill Development* model; and the *Personal Growth* model. Cox (1989) builds on this work by proposing five models of English which have been widely recognised as functionally relevant. The first section of the Literature Review will examine these most widely recognised principles underpinning the central models of English teaching in use today as defined by Cox, as his development of Dixon's initial propositions provide a more detailed description of teacher practice.

2.1.1 Cox's Five Models of English

The recommendations of the British government appointed English Working Party chaired by Brian Cox in 1989 – widely known as the *Cox Report* (Cox, 1989) – were not only generally influential, but more specifically formed the basis upon which subject English was constructed in the National Curriculum. The most influential factor in the development of the NSW Syllabuses from the 1970s onwards has historically been the Dartmouth seminar of

1966, but the focus on the Cox Report in this present study is justified by the value found in its recognition of five distinct models of teaching subject English. These are:

- A "personal growth" view focuses on the child: it emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives.
- A "cross-curricular" view focuses on the school: it emphasises that all teachers (of English and of other subjects) have a responsibility to help children with the language demands of different subjects on the school curriculum: otherwise areas of the curriculum may be closed to them. In England, English is different from other school subjects, in that it is both a subject and a medium of instruction for other subjects.
- An "adult needs" view focuses on communication outside the school: it emphasises the responsibility of English teachers to prepare children for the language demands of adult life, including the workplace, in a fast-changing world. Children need to learn to deal with the day-to-day demands of spoken language and of print; they also need to be able to write clearly, appropriately and effectively.
- A "cultural heritage" view emphasises the responsibility of schools to lead children to an appreciation of those works of literature that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language.

A "cultural analysis" view emphasises the role of English in helping children towards a critical understanding of the world and cultural environment in which they live. Children should

know about the processes by which meanings are conveyed, and about the ways in which print and other media carry values. (DES and WO, 1989, Paras 2.23-27).

In 1966, at Dartmouth, British specialists in English Teacher Education met as “growth” model standard-bearers with their counterparts from across the Atlantic. The Dartmouth conference as it became known is widely recognized as a watershed moment in the development of Subject English both in Britain and consequently in Australia. Dixon’s *Growth Through English* (1967) is the Manifesto of this conference, and its proclamations echoed powerfully across Australia. Sawyer (2002) claims that “the “growth” model as popularised by Dixon was transferred more or less wholesale into Australia” (p.270), and as will be shown in Chapter 2.3, Dartmouth and the above listed models proposed by Cox influenced the development of syllabus documents in NSW during the latter part of the 20th Century at least up to the 2002 Syllabus (Sawyer, 2008).

Whatever the rights of it, growth-model English, associated with key figures from the Dartmouth seminar, became increasingly prominent in Australian guidelines for secondary English curriculum during the early 1970s.

(Beavis, 2010, P.299)

Post-Dartmouth, the 7-10 Syllabus in NSW gave pre-eminence to what Cox referred to as the Personal Growth Model (focuses on the child: it emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives.). The 1977 Syllabus, and those since, however, have continued to incorporate to differing degrees, the elements of the other 4 models that Cox saw as constituting subject English in schools.

What is pertinent to the present study is Cox's hypothesis that the most influential pedagogical and theoretical models which have historically shaped the identity of present-day subject English, have in turn brought about five distinct models of teaching English. Cox provides a recognised and generally agreed upon framework with which to analyse participant responses in the teacher interviews.

The *Cox Report* itself recognises the danger in presenting five distinct models of English when it states:

It is possible to identify within the English teaching profession a number of different views of the subject. We list them here though we stress that they are not the only possible views, they are not sharply distinguishable and they are not mutually exclusive. (para. 2.20)

Acknowledging that the five models are not mutually exclusive is particularly important in the present study, as teachers transposing theory into practice make use of a variety of models to fulfil their teaching needs. In fact the new NSW English Syllabus (2012) itself recognises this:

The *English K–10 Syllabus* enables teachers to draw on the methods of different theoretical perspectives and models for teaching English to assist their students to achieve the syllabus outcomes at the highest levels.

(Board of Studies NSW, 2012, p.10)

This ability of teachers to draw from a variety of theoretical perspectives is very pertinent to the present research and will be highlighted both in the Literature Review and in the actual teacher narratives as well.

The following section highlights research conducted with teachers and trainee teachers using Cox's models of English to further emphasise the functional importance and interdependence of these models.

2.1.2 Research Applied to Classroom Practice

Goodwyn (1992) conducted a study of 46 teachers working in a range of schools in Britain assessing their own views regarding which of these models actually influenced their teaching practice the most. The results of this study indicated that teachers recognise and make use of all five of the models listed above, but the importance they assigned to each model varied significantly. The *Personal Growth* model appeared to predominate, together with the *Cultural Analysis* model. Goodwyn describes a situation in which a combination of these two models guides teachers' classroom practices. The *Cultural Heritage* model on the other hand, although acknowledged by the majority of teachers, was found to have limited impact on quotidian classroom practices. Hardman and Williamson (1993) conducted a similar survey using Goodwyn's (1992) questionnaire structure, but investigated trainee teachers in Britain and the theoretical assumptions they saw as most influential in shaping their future teaching. The results of this subsequent survey are strikingly similar to those presented by Goodwyn (1992), with *Growth* and *Cultural Analysis* predominating and *Cultural Heritage* less significant. Interestingly all the teachers and almost all the trainee teachers involved in these two surveys agreed with the need to incorporate all five models in their teaching.

In 1999 Goodwyn and Findlay continued this research assessing the beliefs and quotidian practices of working teachers and the extent to which Cox's models still influence them in their teaching. The results of this survey highlighted the continuing distancing of teachers from the "prescriptive and dogmatic" (p.19) *Cultural Heritage* view. The teachers

were seen to favour the *Personal Growth* model in its valuing of a personal response to literature as well as acknowledging the increasing influence of the *Cultural Analysis* model on their teaching practice, particularly with regards to the inclusion of media texts.

The literature on the topic outlined above suggests that the individual models or combinations of these models (as described by the *Cox Report* itself) govern the classroom practices of teachers. Thus Cox's five models of English offer an initial framework that can contribute to the understanding of how teachers select texts for their classroom. As Thomson (2008), among many others, declares:

In teaching there is no such thing as practice without theory, because every move a teacher makes in a classroom is informed by a theory of how people learn best. (p.39)

Cox's models of English may provide a framework with which to begin assessing the pedagogical and literary models underpinning teachers' selection of texts for their classroom, but it is Marshall's (2000) work actually involved in the application of these models in *defining* English teachers – rather than theoretical models themselves – that can truly provide a practical and interpretative working tool for the present research. The following section examines Marshall's teacher descriptions and how these will be used in analysing the data in the present research.

The decision to use these two particular Models and Descriptors is not taken lightly, since these provide an interpretative framework for the Narratives themselves. Cox (1989) and Marshall (2000) were selected as they not only provided a wide possibility of inclusion (particularly Marshall), but because Cox, from which the Marshall models derive, has a particularly widespread currency in research and can be applied to a wide range of curriculum, school systems and teaching experience.

This widespread currency is evident in the numerous uses of the Cox Model in research and literature from its initial conception to today. Aside from the numerous references quoted above, which not only rely on the Cox Models of English Teaching as a starting point for research, but use it as a defining framework in understanding the work that teachers undertake, Cox plays a prominent role in more recent and contextually relevant – with regards to the present thesis – literature (Gannon, Howie, Sawyer, 2009) aimed at discussing and presenting the teaching of English in Australia to a new generation of English Teachers.

2.2 From Models of English to Teacher Descriptions

Marshall assesses Cox's five models, comparing these with the research findings of Goodwyn (1992), Hardman and Williamson (1993) and Goodwyn and Findlay (1999), arguing that although all five models are present within the socio-political debate surrounding the definition of subject English in the UK, only the *Personal Growth* and *Cultural Analysis* models seem to actually be impacting on classroom practice (pp.48-49). She interrogates these models always keeping in mind the possibilities of overlap as outlined in the *Cox Report*. Building on the work of Griffiths (1992) and Davies (1996) who had identified two broad historical categories based on Cox's models, the *liberal humanists* and the *cultural theorists*, Marshall – conscious of the insufficient nature of relying solely on a single historical analysis of subject English – brings together the previous established research and her own "insider knowledge as an English teacher, LEA advisor and lecturer in education at King's College London" (Marshall et al, 1999 p.7) to create what she terms "A Rough Guide to English Teachers" (Marshall, 2000, p.56).

Marshall et al (1999) constructs five definitions of the English teacher based on competing ideas and convictions teachers could hold on the following six central concepts that she refers to as *kernels*:

- the grouping of pupils by 'ability';
- the management of change within schools;
- attitudes towards the teaching of grammar, knowledge about language and standard English;
- the teaching of literature (and in particular the canon);
- assessment; and
- attitudes to the arts, creativity and personal growth. (pp.7-8)

On this basis Marshall (2000) proceeds to compose five *character* descriptions of English teachers. These she refers to as:

- Old Grammarians
- Pragmatists
- Liberals
- Technicians
- Critical Dissenters (pp.73-121)

Marshall's purpose in creating these descriptions is to assist teachers in coming to terms and recognising the philosophical standpoint underpinning their teaching. This is something Thomson (2008), Webb (1996) and Dewey (1902) – among many others – believe to be of crucial importance:

Theorise our own practice- make explicit to ourselves what theory of learning it is that informs our practice. Many teachers hold their theory of

learning unconsciously. Only by knowing what their purposes are can they negotiate the curriculum with their students. (Thomson, 2008, p.38)

These descriptions were presented to teachers who were asked to identify the group they identified the most with. The sample included 75 teachers, and only 3 of these could not place themselves in one of the five groupings (pp.70-73). Marshall's methodology consisted not only in presenting teachers with a text whose *content* defined a particular model of teaching, but whose very *form* also reflected the model being described. The language used in each description was designed to elicit recognition in teachers working under that model, while alienating those opposing that particular model. Marshall et al (1999) describe it:

Key words and phrases were placed into the text which were intended, as far as possible, to resonate with one group while alienating the others. The text for the Pragmatists, for example, was infused with language of school management, that for the Technicians talked of skills, while the description of the Critical Dissenters used the language of opposition and dissent. These were wrapped around a kernel of key issues already identified. (pp.8-9)

This resulted in clear and usable results as can be seen in Table 2.1 below:

	Old Grammarian	Pragmatist	Liberal	Technician	Critical Dissenters	Un-decided
Total	11	15	8	19	19	3

Table 2.1: Classification of teachers in sample (p.10)

The present research's preference of Marshall's teacher descriptions over Cox's Models lies in the discovery (Goodwyn, 1992; Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999; and Hardman and Williamson, 1993) that of Cox's five models only two seem to elicit recognition by teachers when compared to their teaching practices. Conversely, as can be seen in Table 2.1, in Marshall's model all five categories elicited personal recognition. The bilateral representation of teachers as either *liberal humanists* or *cultural theorists* (Davies, 1996; Griffith, 1992) tends to group teachers with strongly diverse positions together, and as such can only be useful in very general terms. Marshall's five teacher *characterisations* stemming from these foundational models, and constructed around six central *kernels* allows for a broader range of recognition, while allowing more specific definitions of English teachers based on their practice.

Since the five teacher descriptions as presented by Marshall (2000) are central in analysing and formulating the teacher narratives presented in the present research, they are examined in the following section. For every description I provide significant quotes and make reference to the *kernels* highlighted by Marshall. In this way – using key quotations and providing a point-by-point summary – both the essential *form* and *content* of each model will become apparent.

2.2.1 The Old Grammarians

The *Old Grammarians* as a group “believe in the improving and civilising qualities of literature” (Marshall, 2000, P.73). Their view of subject English is Arnoldian, however it is less about

books correcting behaviour than literature unlocking other worlds, other possibilities; a form of escape. And perhaps most importantly they are about developing an aesthetic sensibility. (p.73)

They are the inheritors of Leavis' *Great Tradition* as developed by Richard Hoggart and Brian Cox himself, with a focus on the aesthetic and the academic.

Literature...is intimately tied in with their view of what education is for – it is reformatory at the level of the individual; it is about personal growth, about personal fulfilment, both emotionally and in terms of life chances. (p.74)

According to this group, the selection of texts for the classroom should be in the hands of the teachers themselves, since

teaching is about finding the book that will create the spark. It is about inspiration, which almost by definition cannot be produced by government diktat. (p.75)

The majority of teachers in this group would oppose the grouping of students by ability particularly in the early secondary years, and are in favour of “100 per cent coursework because it avoids the reductive nature of timed tests” since “it is hard to produce inspiration to order” (p.75).

The opposition to streaming, their view of literature and their preference for “impromptu ways of working” over more “formulaic methods” (p.75) often find them at variance with the school senior management, particularly with their being “unashamedly teacher centred” since the teacher is the “conduit of inspiration” (p.75).

This group encourages creativity in writing; they have a strong belief in the value of learning grammar, and proper use of language (p.75). Furthermore Marshall's results

indicate that teachers recognising themselves in this group believe English to be about “fostering individuality, imagination and inspiration through literature” (p.82).

2.2.2 The Pragmatists

Marshall begins describing the *Pragmatists* not so much through their teaching practices, but through their attempts to

manage educational change, both within the school and at national level, and in particular the way in which they confront those changes which most impinge upon their beliefs and practice as English teachers. (p.82)

Teachers in this group are modernisers, focused on the practical preparation of their students for the complicated world of standard nationalised tests such as NAPLAN. Their approach to English is involved and aimed at resolving difficulties:

They are also keen to implement new initiatives and will set up working parties around issues such as boys and English, whole-school language and reading policies and the like. (p.83)

Pragmatists believe in mixed ability classrooms but recognise the inherent difficulties such groupings create; particularly with regards to helping their students achieve maximum results in standardised tests.

The majority of this group will have entered the profession from the “mid-eighties onwards” (p.82) and as such their university studies will have been influenced by some form of literary theory. This is evident in their approach to literature:

For them, the English curriculum allows for the possibility of empowering pupils by giving them the ability to analyse critically the society in which

they live. Again they are keen to equip and prepare pupils with the critical tools that they need to analyse any text. This view informs both their approach to literature and the study of language and has led them to consider the importance of the role of the media. Texts are chosen which highlight issues and critical possibilities. Teachers are likely to emphasise the social contexts in which they were produced. (p.83)

This socially critically aware group will oppose government reforms, believing that subject English is being altered for the worse by external pressures. However, they continue to look for ways to implement their teaching philosophy in a changing subject.

The teaching and literary philosophy that comes through in Marshall's results is a *Cultural Analysis* approach, with nine teachers highlighting "to analyse critically the society in which they live" (p.84). However although they express a preference towards *Cultural Analysis*, "as a guiding principle in their approach to texts and how they should be taught" (p.90) they do not adhere to it strictly, as their practice is more often than not tailored by the management and bureaucratic circumstances of their teaching context.

2.2.3 The Liberals

Like the *Old Grammarians*, the *Liberals* are also "very much in the Arnoldian tradition in that they have a strong belief in the benefits of English as a subject" (p.91). For this group English remains the last bastion in the curriculum

for unlocking doors and for exploring thoughts and emotions as well as promoting empathy, understanding and tolerance. Both the study of literature and creative writing are essential to this endeavour. (p.91)

Teachers working under this model begin from the pupil's point of view, developing it by exploring issues relevant to them. They look for literature of

social realism...because they consider that while style and aesthetic value are significant, they are less important than the content or message in the teaching of English as a school subject. (p.91)

At a practical level the *Liberals* often organise schemes of work around “themes in literature” (p.91) aimed at exploring real aspects of life rather than literary ideas. Therefore they look for the same in students’ own creative writing, valuing the closeness to the *real*, and authenticity over *flashiness* or writing that is “too clever by half” (p.91).

Their foundational idea of English as a stalwart for the personal face of the schooling system leads them to emphasise the pastoral aspect of the subject as a response to their fear of the uneasy nature of the changing “ethos of schooling” (p.92). They fear that an emphasis on pre-twentieth century literature would “switch off many pupils” (p.92), and prefer coursework assessment to the rigidity of timed exams, as well as finding value in mixed ability classes over streaming.

In summation, as a group they attempt to apply the *Growth Model* to their text selection and teaching, aiming to illuminate the students’ world by organising their work around central themes promoting the supportive and pastoral role of the teacher of English in humanising a degrading schooling system.

2.2.4 The Technicians

Heavily influenced by Cox’s *Adult Needs* model, the *Technicians* give special emphasis to the skills of English. These include comprehension, spelling, punctuation and grammar. They value the notion of language in use and promote activities to help their “pupils become competent” in a variety of every day forms of language (p.96). Key words in

this group are *effectively* and *accurately*, which is reflected particularly in their approach to reading:

In reading they are concerned to know how much pupils have understood of what they have read and to develop their reading skills. Comprehension is likely, therefore, to be an important teaching strategy, both as a means of assessing pupils' understanding and as a means of increasing their reading skills. (p.96)

Reading is highly valued and should replace computer games and television watching, and thus this group does not rate media studies as a high priority, as they would mostly prefer their students to "exercise their critical skills on more traditional texts" (p 96). Aside from reading, the *Technicians* value creative writing, and although they believe in formal examinations, they recognise the need for coursework based assessment as it fosters more opportunities for creative writing.

Furthermore, teaching "appropriately according to (student) needs" (p.97) is crucial, since addressing the students' technical and linguistic weaknesses is of particular importance. This needs to be done to "prepare children thoroughly" for formal assessment, often viewing literature in this context as a "body of knowledge to be tested" (p.97).

Generally the *Technicians* are teachers who favour streaming students based on ability levels, since not only is it "important to stretch and challenge the most able, by presenting them with demanding literature", but it is also preferable to give "the less-able books that are more relevant to them, or abridged versions so they can appreciate the story" (p.97).

2.2.5 The Critical Dissenters

Marshall begins by describing this group as “cultural theorists” interested “in critical literacy” (p.109). She does however emphasise that this group includes teachers working in quite a broad spectrum:

They form a spectrum of opinion that is coloured by the degree of emphasis placed on literature. At one end can be found those influenced by linguistic theories which emphasise the notion of critical literacy arising out of theorists like Gramsci. At the other end are those influenced by a literary model of cultural dissent, which emphasises the political context and connotations of all literature and the need to challenge received norms. (p.109)

The majority of teachers in this group gravitate towards the centre of the spectrum described above, although this may change depending on the area and subject being discussed. Nevertheless what unites them is the fact that they are (as implied by the mention of Gramsci) to the “left of centre” (p.109). This is displayed in their “breaking free of the dead weight of the Leavisite canon”, through the rise of new literary theories aimed at deconstructing texts and highlighting their context-dependent and socially-constructed nature, allowing for the inclusion of a larger variety of media texts. Some however who are “dissatisfied with the cultural relativism which this position implies” tend to focus more on the “idea of radical readings of canonical texts as well as suggesting alternatives to that canon” (p.110).

For the *Critical Dissenters* ideas about empowerment and equality are paramount, and thus they are “totally committed to mixed-ability teaching” (p.110), guided not so much by pedagogical ideals, but by the those of democracy, in which students need to have access to the “same texts and ideas” (p.110) to avoid the disenfranchisement of the lower ability students. Thus, although not all students are the same, they must be exposed to the same

opportunities. This concept, driven by their teaching philosophy impacts on their teaching practice as they tend to focus on group work and discussion in class, since by delivering the subject in this manner all pupils gain access to challenging texts.

Lastly, this final group is usually more conversant with literary theories, and sees them actively influencing their practice. They are also more willing to constantly reappraise their theoretical and pedagogical models in their constant search for “the best way to learn” (p.112).

Both Marshall’s descriptions of English teachers and Cox’s Models of English teaching are constructed following research conducted in the United Kingdom, and as such the contexts from which these theoretical models emerge are significantly different from the context of the present research conducted in NSW. Although the subject matter – English teachers – is the same, the differences in curriculum design, syllabus requirements and teacher training all impact on the teaching context. The present research recognises these differences and acknowledges that both these teaching models and teacher descriptions may not be easily transposed to the NSW teaching context. Nevertheless their value in describing teacher practice outweighs the issues involved with what may be termed as context specific findings.

2.2.6 Relevance of Teacher Descriptions in Classroom Practice

Marshall’s (2000) characterisation of the five types of English teachers emphasises the observation made in the Cox report of the fluidity in practice of the boundaries between models so as to achieve a unity of purpose in the teaching of literature and subject English. Teachers should therefore aim to find, select and teach texts that meet the needs, interests

and capacities of their students, often drawing on a variety of theoretical and pedagogical models, to lead to successful engagement. As Sawyer and McFarlane (2000) point out:

An approach that allows teachers to make conscious and reflective choices between aspects of models suitable to the kinds of learning intended would seem to be an appropriate approach to curriculum design. (p.4)

Sawyer and McFarlane go on to describe an “intelligent and intellectualised eclecticism” (p.25) which would allow teachers to make conscious decisions about models depending on the current context their particular situation has them operating in. It is eclectic use of English teaching models which is particularly significant to this research, and the teacher interviews aim to discern which of these models or combinations of models are the most prominent and influential. It is however important to mention that since the present research is particularly interested in teacher eclecticism with regards to teaching models, Marshall’s descriptions of teachers themselves must also be viewed as fluid, with teachers probably adopting aspects of multiple descriptions rather than only one.

2.3 Pedagogical and Theoretical Models Informing the NSW Years 7-10 English Syllabuses

Having examined the broader theoretical and pedagogical models impacting on teacher practice in the UK (Cox, 1989; Marshall, 2000), and identifying a framework within which to interpret teacher assumptions, it is necessary to acknowledge the context in which the teachers interviewed in the present research are working. This section considers the NSW English teaching context, through an examination of the influences on the NSW English syllabuses. The aim of this section is not to present a close scrutiny of the past and present English Syllabuses (cf. Brock 1982; Green and Beavis, 1996; Green and Cormack, 2008;

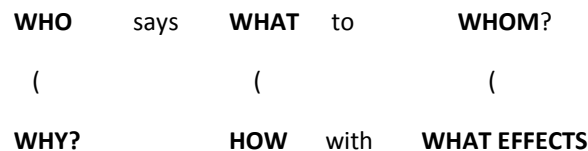
Sawyer, 2003) but rather to survey and critique the various theoretical and pedagogical models informing the NSW Stage 4-5 English Syllabus (2004) and subsequently, teacher practice.

2.3.1 The 1971 New South Wales English Syllabus for Forms I-IV

As Manuel (1997) asserts, “there has always been, of course a strong British influence on the history of education in NSW” (p.4), and Brock (1982) corroborates this perspective on the nature of subject English in NSW – particularly in its early formative days – as developing out of a strong British tradition, with very little influence from North America. Brock identifies the 1953 and 1971 NSW Syllabuses as seminal documents introducing essential British developments into Australia. Subject English’s genesis is generally recognised as starting with the 1921 Newbolt Report, which Sawyer (2009) describes as “the high point of the move to establish the dominance of literature” (p.72), and a major influence on the NSW 1953 Syllabus (Brock, 1996). However, the influence of Britain in shaping Australia’s Syllabus documents can be most obviously seen in the post-Dartmouth, *Growth Through English* (Dixon, 1967) inspired NSW 1971 English Syllabus for Forms I-IV (Years 7-10). The 1971 Syllabus was a watershed in Australian education, and was “the first ‘personal growth’ model syllabus anywhere in the English speaking world” (Brock, 1993, p.30). This was a revolutionary document, guided by Graham Little - the Chairman of the Committee – who had been heavily influenced by Dixon, and as such, the document attempted to implement the *Personal Growth* model at the practical classroom level.

The 1971 Syllabus presented the aims of English in these words: “To develop in pupils the utmost personal competence in using the language” (NSW Secondary Schools Board, 1971, p.4), and expanded this by presenting the Syllabus’ central tenet of “language in use in context” (p.6). In fact the Syllabus is famously represented by a triangle placing the

three key concepts it is trying to capture, namely “Language”, “Use” and “Context” at its apexes with “Competence” at the centre. It expands on this by defining *competence* as “grasp of meaning, form and values” (NSW Secondary Schools Board, 1971, pp.6–7) and presenting a written representation of the graphical triangle model:



(NSW Secondary Schools Board, 1971, p.5)

This brought a “a deliberate shift of emphasis from English as information to English as activity” (p.6), with a focus on “*usage, vocabulary, structure and style*” (Sawyer, 2010, p.11), through listening, reading, speaking and writing activities in a variety of contexts summarised as the personal, the everyday, the literary and the media. This was to be organised adopting a thematic approach in order to help the students achieve an “intellectual organising of experience” of the life around them (Dixon, 1967, p.7).

In order to successfully capture the *experience*, Dixon envisioned flexibility in subject English mirrored by his famous statement:

What we want is something less specific than a curriculum and something more ordered than chaos. (Dixon, 1967, p.91)

This flexibility is highlighted by the Committee’s refusal to create a long and complex document. In fact the central Syllabus document is only 17 pages long. Furthermore, since Dixon envisioned a situation with “teachers setting up frameworks within which pupils can make choices suited to their developmental levels and interests” (Sawyer 2002, p.58) flexibility within the Syllabus was paramount:

It would be inappropriate to make detailed provision for different stages and levels of study. If English courses are to cater for varied needs, interests and capacity, they will need to be flexible. (NSW Secondary School Board, 1971, p.16)

The 1971 Syllabus did not prescribe texts to be read, apart from general advice found in supporting documents: the choice of what texts to study was left up to the teacher who had close knowledge of his/her students' abilities, needs and interests. This, and the way reading is presented in the 1971 Syllabus is clearly relevant to the present study. As will be seen in later sections, there has been a historical tradition in NSW in Stages 4-5 of teachers selecting texts for their own classrooms as opposed to Stage 6.

Sawyer (2002) highlights reading – one of the four language modes - in the 1971 Syllabus as focusing on “enjoyment, speed, comprehension, reading aloud interpretatively, reading aloud with appropriate pronunciation and intonation and reading efficiently for a wide range of purposes and in a wide range of situations” (p.65). He underlines the importance of *enjoyment* which is seen as key, thus implying a sense of deep student engagement with the texts, and a reliance on “individualised reading programs in classroom time” (p.65).

The influence of the NSW 1971 English Syllabus for Years I-IV is evident in all subsequent NSW Syllabuses, including the 2004 Syllabus which continues to empower teachers recognising their essential role in the selection of texts for their classroom by not presenting mandated texts for study. In fact, even though the 1971 Syllabus was enthusiastically welcomed – since it upheld a consensus on what English teaching was which would be impossible to reproduce today – the central framework it proposed only began to be implemented some time later. Sawyer (2002) makes reference to a lack of adequately funded training, when he states: “intelligent implementation of the new Syllabus was, at best partial” (p.41) until the early 1980s (see Brock, 1983, pp.184-185; Nay-Brock, 1984;

Watson 1978). It was only in the 1987 NSW Syllabus that the seeds sowed by Graham Little and his committee reached full fruition, and this in turn influenced the 2004 Syllabus which is the central document guiding the teaching of the present research's participants, with the added perspectives brought in by the development and adoption of the post-Growth movements of Reader Response theory and Critical Literacy.

2.3.2 The 1987 New South Wales English Syllabus for Forms I-IV

The 1987 NSW English Syllabus for Forms I-IV was a continuation and confirmation of the *Growth* principles introduced in the 1971 Syllabus, and in fact Sawyer (2002) describes it as “fulfilling the promise” (p.168). As stated above, the brief nature of the 1971 Syllabus while allowing for teacher freedom in selection of texts and teaching practice lacked a clear guide for teachers who were approaching the *Growth* model for the first time. This and a lack of adequate funding for training resulted in a slow implementation of the founding principles in practice. The 1987 Syllabus was sixty-seven pages long (fifty-one longer than its predecessor), and aside from developing the concepts brought forward in 1971 it included suggested activities for teachers to implement in their classroom in each section. This focus on providing increased detail about how to practically implement the Syllabus in class, while maintaining the key vision of the 1971 Syllabus, made it far more accessible and useful to the practicing teacher.

The similarities between the 1987 and the 1971 Syllabuses derive from their reliance on the *Growth* model as presented by Dixon (1967), but there are subtle differences and developments. As stated above, the 1971 Syllabus' aim was “to develop in pupils the utmost personal competence in using the language” (NSW Secondary Schools Board, 1971, p.4). In 1987 the aim remained similar, but its very wording expresses the shift in some basic principles: “to enable students to strive towards personal excellence in using language”

(NSW Board of Secondary Education, 1987: 5-7). *Competence* has been replaced with *excellence*, but more importantly, *to develop* has become *to enable*. The wording implies a more focused effort on approaching English from a child centred perspective, in which the teacher's role is seen as more of a facilitator in what Sawyer (2002) calls "a natural development" (p.169). In fact the English teacher is described in the following terms:

[a]n initiator, a facilitator, a respondent to students' work, an instructor, a co-ordinator, but always one who enjoys students' trust and shares with them their language learning experiences. (NSW Board of Secondary Education, 1987: 18)

Language and literature as tools for organising *experience* are fundamental aspects of the 1987 Syllabus again mirroring Dixon's (1967) quote highlighted above:

It is mainly through language that human beings explore their public and private worlds, organise their experience and form their values. (NSW Board of Secondary Education, 1987: 5)

The focus on language and literature as shaping and organising experience reflects the growing influence of *Reader Response Theory* in the 1987 Syllabus, particularly Rosenblatt (1976):

Literature's revelation of the diverse elements of our complex cultural heritage may free him from the provincialism of his own necessarily limited environment. Books may often provide him with an image of the kind of personality and way of life that he will seek to achieve. (p.273)

The 1987 Syllabus confirms the contexts of English defined in 1971 - everyday communication, personal expression, literature and mass media – and once again the prominence given to literature is easily recognisable (Sawyer, 2002, p.178). Literature is essential as it "provides a unique context for language growth through expansion of the student's individual world" (NSW Board of Secondary Education, 1987, p.45), as already underlined in Rosenblatt's (1976) quote above. It is in literature that students' can achieve

“excellence in using language” (NSW Secondary Schools Board, 1971, p.4), particularly since under a *Growth* model the students’ own writings and imaginative re-creations are included in the definition of literature.

Together with literature, *reading* – as one of the central *modes* of English – is dealt with accordingly. The teaching of English is to be structured around the notion of “*units of work*” (NSW Board of Secondary Education, 1987, p.18) reflecting the 1971 Syllabus idea of working under a thematic approach in order to contextualise the experience of English in language and literature. Reading in the 1987 Syllabus is aimed at students understanding, enjoying and responding “perceptively to what they read in a wide range of contexts” (NSW Board of Secondary Education, 1987, p.29). Thus, *reading* should be aimed at presenting students with a breadth of experience, using relevant, engaging and enjoyable texts while valuing the students’ own individual response (Sawyer, 2002, p.178). At a practical level the 1987 Syllabus guides teachers towards achieving this by encouraging the use of:

- Drama as performance;
- Class libraries;
- Individual reading;
- Young Adult Literature;
- Australian Literature;
- A variety of genres;
- Literature relevant to the age and ability levels of the class;
- Imaginative re-creation activities. (adapted from Sawyer, 2002, p.171)

Once again in the above list we can see the influence of *Reader Response Theory* acting on the foundational *Growth* model upon which both the 1971 and 1987 Syllabuses are structured.

The 1987 NSW English Syllabus for Forms I-IV upheld the implementation of the *Growth* model in New South Wales started by the 1971 Syllabus. It persevered in presenting English as an activity, but its focus on literature as experience highlights the growing

influence of *Reader Response Theory* on curriculum development. Teachers continued to be independent in their selection of texts, but the Syllabus document differed from its predecessor as it attempted to guide the teachers more practically, by describing activities for the classroom as well as setting up a more organised *units of work* structure.

2.3.3 The 2004 New South Wales English Syllabus for Stage 4-5

Following on from the 1971 and the 1987 Syllabuses, the 2004 NSW English Syllabus for Years 7-10, is the central document defining the teaching practice and text selection procedure of the teachers participating in the present study as it is the Syllabus framework they were working under during the interview process. The 2004 Syllabus is an even longer document than its two predecessors, (eighty-three pages), and makes use of the increased length by expanding on several concepts. It can be seen as continuing to build on the foundational *Growth* model, with an increasing reliance on both *Reader Response* and *Critical Literacy* as will be outlined below. Since the mandatory texts requirements and the teacher's role in selecting texts have already been examined in Chapter 1, this section will focus on how the Syllabus constructs *Critical Literacy* as a useful tool to be used in conjunction with the teaching models already present in the previous Syllabuses.

The aim of the 2004 Syllabus is presented as follows:

to enable students to use, understand, appreciate, reflect on and enjoy the English language in a variety of texts and to shape meaning in ways that are imaginative, interpretive, critical and powerful. (Board of Studies NSW, 2004, p.12)

The use of the word "critical" in this statement of the Syllabus's aims is quite pivotal to understanding the differences present in the newer Syllabus. In fact the word *critical* appears eighty-five (85) times in the document. It is usually used in relation with textual

analysis and reading, and closely linked to the concept of *context* which appears two-hundred and seven (207) times in the Syllabus:

Context is used in its broadest sense. It refers to the range of personal, social, historical, cultural and workplace conditions in which a text is responded to and composed. (NSW Board of Studies, 2004, p.16)

It is this very impulse towards enabling students to become critically aware of the various contexts impinging on the meaning created by the text which differentiates the present Syllabus from its predecessors. This is also highlighted in the *Glossary's* definition of *Critical Literacy*:

The ability to question, challenge and evaluate the meanings and purposes of texts. It involves an understanding of the ways in which values and attitudes are communicated through language, including how subject matter, point of view and language embody assumptions about issues such as gender, ethnicity and class. A critical literacy approach to teaching English has students composing, responding to, analysing and evaluating written, spoken, visual and multimedia texts from various perspectives in order to learn how they operate as cultural products. (NSW Board of Studies, 2004, p.79)

The increasing focus on the text's socially and culturally constructed nature is also evident in the Syllabus' decision to move away from the concept of *literature*, towards the more general concept of *text* defined as:

Communications of meaning produced in any medium that incorporates language, including sound, print, film, electronic and multimedia representations. Texts include written, spoken, nonverbal or visual communications of meaning. (NSW Board of Studies, 2004, p.83)

In fact the word *literature* appears only ten (10) times in the entire 2004 Syllabus as compared to *text* which is used one-thousand one-hundred and six (1106) times. Furthermore the move away from *literature* to *language* as indicated in the above quote

("any medium that incorporates language") is highlighted by the number of times the word is used in the syllabus: three-hundred and seven (307). The dualistic importance of *text* and *language* in the Syllabus is evident:

Language shapes our understanding of ourselves and our world, and is the primary means by which we relate to others. In Years 7 to 10, English is the study and use of the English language in its various textual forms. These encompass spoken, written and visual texts of varying complexity through which meaning is shaped, conveyed, interpreted and reflected. (NSW Board of Studies, 2004, p.6)

The growing influence of post-structuralist theory through the implementation of *Critical Literacy* can be seen as impacting on the 2004 Syllabus and thus also on teachers' own theoretical underpinnings – as described by Goodwyn (1992), Hardman and Williamson (1993), and Goodwyn and Findlay (1999). This is evident in the larger variety of mandated types of texts.

The Syllabus proposes that the study of English allow students to

develop their critical and imaginative faculties and broaden their cultural understanding. They examine the contexts of language usage to understand how meaning is shaped by a variety of social factors. (NSW Board of Studies, 2004 p.6)

It is in attempting to understand that meaning is not universal, but that it is something that can be shaped by context that Critical Literacy's most powerful tool *deconstruction*, as described by Misson (1998) achieves usefulness:

Deconstruction is the analytical process by which the ideology of the text is shown not to be an actual reflection of the world, but the product of certain textual strategies that privilege a particular viewpoint, suppress inconsistent material, or smooth over inherent contradictions. Deconstruction looks for the points at which the strain shows in the text, and works on them, heightening the contradiction, bringing back the

suppressed material, exposing the unjustified valuation of one of the terms in an opposition, until the ideology of the text is apparent, and its seeming naturalness has been exposed as constructed. (p.148).

By shaking and agitating a text's contents it becomes possible to unlock the part of the meaning hidden in a text's sub-text, producing new meanings and often enriching the original text in surprising ways. This brings forth what Foucault (1976) calls the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, always remembering that texts are "like a dark glass in which we see our own reflection more often than the social reality which produced them" (Caroll, 1989, p.176). Critical Literacy deconstructs a text by revealing the many meanings present and the ideologies at work in shaping a text and positioning the reader.

The 2004 Syllabus is a document which aims to make constructive and eclectic use of a variety of English teaching models, and is in turn influenced by a variety of theoretical and pedagogical models. The Syllabus itself presents this as a deliberate choice, pre-empting the 2012 NSW English Syllabus when it states:

The syllabus enables teachers to draw on the methods of different theoretical perspectives and models for teaching English to assist their students to achieve the syllabus outcomes at the highest levels. (NSW Board of Studies, 2004, p.6)

Developing and building on the previous Syllabuses, the 2004 Syllabus makes a conscious decision to incorporate the variety of teaching models available in order to facilitate the attainment of "the syllabus outcomes at the highest levels" (p.6). There is a sense that it is not so much a question of philosophy, but rather an attempt to answer the question: "What will most benefit the students?" The answer seems to be found in Sawyer and McFarlane's (2000) previously quoted advice:

An approach that allows teachers to make conscious and reflective choices between aspects of models suitable to the kinds of learning

intended would seem to be an appropriate approach to curriculum design. (p.4)

The 2004 Syllabus allows for an “intelligent and intellectualised eclecticism” (p.25) aimed at fostering a child centred teaching environment aimed at flexible teaching model adoption, and less concerned with strict theoretical alignment. Having briefly examined the influences on NSW English Syllabus history, with a focus on the seminal 1971 and 1987 NSW English Syllabus for Forms I-IV, as well as the 2004 Syllabus, it is now time to turn back to the central aspects of the present research: texts and reading. The following section of the Literature Review examines research dealing with adolescent reading practices, with a focus on what students enjoy reading, and how this compares to what student are required to read in class.

2.4 Understanding Teenagers’ Reading and the Role of Teacher-Selected Texts

Given the paucity of research dealing directly with the processes involved in teachers’ selection of texts, it is worthwhile examining the relevant literature on what students enjoy reading, what successfully engages them, and what impact teacher-selected texts have on their reading enjoyment and development.

There is a large quantity of Australian based research on what teenagers enjoy reading, beginning over seventy years ago and continuing to the present (cf Bayly, 1979; Browne, 1932; Bunbury et al 1995; Coates, 1943; Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Lee, 1980; Manuel, 2009; Manuel and Robinson, 2002; Robbins, 1952; Thomson, 1987; Tolley, 1977; Watson, 1977). In the limited space of this Literature Review it would be counter-productive to attempt a summary of the totality of the findings of the research listed above.

Furthermore since the present research is not primarily concerned with this related topic in the first instance, this section will attempt to present a general framework to inform teenage reading preferences, using some broad brushstrokes bringing together the more pertinent findings.

Thomson's (1987) decisively significant research *Understanding Teenagers' Reading* is an influential Australian study of the reading attitudes and practices of adolescents. He examined the reading practices combined with television/video viewing habits and attitudes of teenage students between Year 8 and Year 10. Thomson specifically delved into the ways the students assigned time for reading and television viewing, concerning himself with the correlation and contrasting of these incredibly different figures. Thomson's research concludes that students spend very little or no time reading compared to the time spent watching television. He grimly states that "mental passivity is the characteristic feature of all the leisure pursuits of the majority." (p.17).

Thomson believes that teachers rarely succeed in matching literature with the interests, needs and abilities of their pupils, and attributes the fact that students do less voluntary reading as they grow older to this failure. Furthermore, teacher selection of literature fails to develop a love of reading, and actually may prohibit pleasure, by presenting students with texts which concern them less and less with each passing year. He agrees with the English School Council study where Frank Whitehead (1977) found that teachers commonly imposed difficult adult literature on students before they were prepared for it. Thomson stresses the importance of understanding "what satisfactions teenage readers seek in their reading" (p.37), and invites teachers to consider negotiating the curriculum with their students so as to foster enjoyment and encouragement by making this selection process – together with the 'Why are we reading this?' and the 'What do we expect to gain from this?' – more explicit.

Continuing from Thomson, *The Children's Choice Project* (Bunbury et al, 1995) was based on a large scale study which investigated the leisure and reading activities of 11,461 students in Years 5, 7, 9 and 11 in Australia. Bunbury noted that although teachers professed to be fostering their students "literary response" (p.167), in reality the teachers' ineffective pedagogy failed

to strike a balance between reading for enjoyment and pleasure – engaging students in generating personal meaning and satisfaction – and reading for academic learning, information-gathering, assessment and writing. (Manuel, 2009, p.104)

Thomson (1987) blames this on "unimaginative and uninspiring written exercises" (p.52), as his research findings lead him to believe that:

We claim we are trying to develop a love of reading but our practices prohibit pleasure. Most students can read, but very few choose to do so for pleasure...

We claim we are "fostering enjoyment and the encouragement of reading interests"...but we set examinations that test knowledge about literary methods rather than the quality of the literary experience. (Thomson, 1987, p.12-13)

Manuel and Robinson (2003) agree with Thomson's conclusion that in selecting literature for their classroom teachers do not concretely address the curriculum goals of reading enjoyment, and go as far as concluding that materials prescribed, and pedagogy employed are actually "antithetical to these educational goals" (p.74). These inappropriate choices in the selection of literature, coupled with ineffective reading pedagogy impact detrimentally on teenagers' reading experiences, resulting in students reading less and less as they grow older (Thomson, 1987).

According to Tucker (1999) the practical implementation of wide reading programs – which he describes as one of the most fundamental and accessible developments of the

Post-Dartmouth era – can help students continue reading throughout their school years and beyond. He argues against the *set-text* practice which tends to shy away from reading for pleasure, towards what he describes as “death by a thousand worksheets” (p.175). A study by Worthy and McKool (1996) found that competent adolescent readers were being turned off reading by their dislike for the *set-text*. They hold that students would read much more if they were given access to what they considered to be engaging materials.

This discrepancy between what students would like to read and what they are being presented with through the *set-text* in class (Clark, 2003) becomes more and more obvious as students progress through school, as the texts selected are not answering student needs and interests (Purves, 1999). Ivey and Broaddus (2001) confirmed Bunbury’s (1995) findings that the majority of students rarely encountered texts they wanted to read in class and that they valued choice and independent reading very highly. In fact in this study over 63% of students regarded choice reading as the most enjoyable reading they participated in in class. Clark (2003) agrees with Thomson (1987) insisting that this lack of interest in texts selected at school by teachers is a major influence on the formation of negative attitudes towards reading held by many adolescents, when compared to other leisure pursuits such as television and technology.

The growing impact of technology as a competitor to reading – already evident in the 1990s – was also highlighted by other independent British studies (Hall and Coles, 1999). This research analyses the variety and extent of children’s voluntary reading in the context of the 1990s, a period in which there have been dramatic shifts in children’s leisure habits and interests and in the cultural climate generally. The research supports the Australian findings, showing a tendency in children to read less as they get older, particularly in boys, and underlines the fact that the media plays an important role in influencing children’s choices. Manuel and Robinson (2003) also examine the impact of the media on teenager

reading practices in a major follow up of Thomson's research in Australia. Manuel and Robinson consider the advances made in the areas of technology and the increasing access to various forms of the media, as well as major changes in leisure habits and school curriculum since the 1980s in assessing current students' reading preferences. Like its predecessor (Thomson, 19987) this research focused on the time spent reading relative to other activities, but also examined reading choices and self-image as a reader. The consideration given to the factors influencing adolescent reading practices makes this research particularly pertinent. Among these factors are: motivation – pleasure, information, entertainment, assessment; gender and socio-economic status; and teachers and teaching practice. This overview provides a framework from which to begin assessing these influencing factors. In his study, Thomson (1987) found that the majority of teenagers watched over 3 hours of TV each night, and this has not changed over almost two decades. However Manuel and Robinson's article suggests that there has been a slight increase in teenagers' use of leisure time for reading with 26% reading books regularly for pleasure as compared to 20% in the 1980s. The research also found that teenagers read a significant amount of other texts, especially magazines, with a total of 43% reading a range of texts (not just fiction) for pleasure. Nevertheless, the most pertinent findings deal with student responses to teacher selected literature, and particularly interesting is the role gender differences play in these responses. Only 11% of boys stated that their favourite book had been recommended by a teacher, compared to 43% of the girls. Furthermore 32% of boys said the worst book they had ever read had been prescribed by their teacher, while only 17% of girls said their worst book had been compulsory reading in English. Although the research does not stereotype male reading practices, it highlights the inherent differences in their approach and resistance to literature chosen for them by the teacher. The implication here is that the vastly female dominated profession needs to be aware of student

preferences when selecting literature for the English classroom, in order to redress the unfounded, stereotypical male and female student 'voices' from dominating.

Manuel (2009) also highlights – from the students' perspective – the often inappropriate decisions teachers may make in attempting to match texts to readers. This is once again particularly evident in students' encounters with their "worst" and "favourite" books (p.110-111). Only 15% of students – in a sample of 359 aged between 12-16 years from "diverse geographical and socio-economic backgrounds" (p.106) – credited the discovery of their *favourite* book to a compulsory teacher-selected class novel. If we contrast this to their description of how they encountered their *worst* book, the difficulty teachers face in selecting texts becomes even more apparent. 71% of girls and 82% of boys declared that their *worst* book had been presented to them in class by their teacher. This is a significant increase when compared to Manuel and Robinson's (2003) results only six years before. The top four reasons why they considered the text to be the *worst* were:

- It was boring
- It was irrelevant to me
- It had no storyline
- It had no meaning

(Manuel, 2009, p.111)

The failure of the teacher to interest his/her students through the selection of *relevant* and most importantly *engaging* texts is evident.

Nevertheless, Manuel's (2009) findings mirror those of Manuel and Robinson (2003), indicating that teenagers have an eclectic and wide variety of reading tastes, that cannot be categorised simply in terms of gender. Furthermore, although television viewing, music listening and computer use fill the majority of their leisure time (when not *hanging out with friends*), over 25% of the sample "read-self selected materials in excess of two hours per day" (p.108).

Cope (1997) conducted another research project dealing with reading habits and attitudes of senior students in regards to teacher selected literature. He obtained reading autobiographies from 272 senior students across five schools in Georgia, U.S.A. The research dealt with reading experiences both in school and outside of school, but it is the findings dealing with the in-school, teacher-selected literature which are most interesting. The majority of the students in the study once again had strong negative experiences with teacher-selected classroom literature, and Cope argues that this is for two main reasons: firstly he agrees both with Thomson (1987) and Whitehead (1977) arguing that often teachers present good literature at the wrong time, claiming that some texts are much too complex for the assigned grade level (he uses Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, taught at a Year 8 level as an example of this). Cope believes that presently literature selection is heavily influenced and guided by where teachers want their students to be rather than where they are actually at. This is particularly evident with teacher's use of the classics, as already highlighted by Rosenblatt (1976):

The classics are introduced to the children at an age when it is impossible for them to feel in any personal way the problems of conflicts treated.
(p.216)

But teenagers are finding some reading to be engaging. So what engages them?

Reeves' (2001) study of adolescents' patterns of reading and resistance gives insight into the reasons behind adolescent connections or disconnections with particular texts. It is an interesting case study that in many respects parallels the present research. It is based on student interviews rather than on teacher interviews, but it is fundamentally asking the same question: 'What guided you in selecting this book?' The conclusion it reaches is both perspicacious and practically implementable. Reeves states that adolescents find literature interesting, appealing and engaging if it serves their *purpose* (p.2). This purpose is often unconsciously interwoven in the student's identity as a reader, and yet an understanding of

such motivations is crucial in teacher selection of literature for classroom study. If they know what students are looking for in literature, teachers can help by selecting texts which address their deeper purposes and satisfactions. Manuel and Robinson (2002) state this clearly when they outline the essential elements which form good literature for selection: It must interest and engage the reader, and most of all it should fulfill the student's sense of purpose. It is only by matching texts to students' "interests and instructional needs" that increased motivation to read can be achieved (Ivey, 1999, p.177).

The research presented in this section of the Literature Review underlines the difficulties English teachers face in selecting texts which successfully match students, both in terms of engagement and ability levels and in terms of challenging them to improve, deepen and broaden their reading. This difficulty has deep implications for students' development as readers since their experience of literature in school shapes their identity as readers in the future (Clark, 2003).

The following section will examine the research actually dealing with the factors influencing teacher selection of texts, while the last section will provide a summary of selection recommendations.

2.5 Factors Influencing Selection of Texts

The following research is directly relevant to the present study in terms of themes, context and methodology. Koals (1993) conducted a research project analysing the guiding factors behind the selection of literature for primary English classes. She investigated the effects of *subject matter, student interest, teacher estimate of level, previous readings, age of students, sex of student, illustrations, cover design, name of publisher and name of author*

on teacher selection processes. The sample involved 486, Years 4-6 teachers across 60 schools. The five most influential factors selected by the teachers were:

- Subject Matter Presented.
- Student Interest in Topic.
- Student Ability Level.
- Teacher Knowledge of Literature.
- Age of Students.

A similar questionnaire based study conducted on a smaller scale (Piccolo, 2009) concluded that the top five factors influencing teacher selection of texts for the junior secondary English classroom in NSW were:

- Age of Students.
- Student Ability Level.
- Reading Matter Presented.
- Availability.
- Syllabus Guidelines.

Three of the five main influencing factors match with Koals' (1993) findings, and it is interesting to note that the secondary teachers positioned 'Teacher Knowledge of Literature' seventh in their total ranking, only three positions below that of the primary teachers. Also interesting is the fact that both in Koals (1993) and in Piccolo (2009) teachers gave lesser importance to gender, which however gained importance in the secondary years when compared to the primary teachers' responses.

The role played by a teacher's knowledge and comfort level with a particular text is also evident in the research conducted by Tuft (2001). The project investigated what texts are found in high school book-rooms, and why they are there. Although Tuft does not delve

deeply into why certain books are selected by teachers to be taught, she does succeed in providing a brief outline as to why established books remain, and why teachers are so fond of teaching them. The impact of teacher comfort with and knowledge of a particular text is established as an important factor guiding and influencing selection, as already outlined in both Koals (1993) and Piccolo (2009).

Lastly, teaching experience, and position in the teacher's own faculty hierarchical structure may impact teachers' text selection in different ways, particularly with regards to how they themselves see their ownership of the selection process. This difference in sense of ownership between early career teachers and experienced teachers is highlighted by Ball, Kenny and Gardiner (1990) in their description of two possible educational leadership models, and the way in which these influence how decisions are made. Ball, Kenny and Gardiner describe a *top-down* approach in which decisions are characterized as abstract, prescriptive, positivist and objective, while assessing a *bottom-up* decision making model in which policies are immediate, negotiable, interpretative and subjective. It is clear that the more experienced teachers who work under the second model described enjoy a more extensive sense of ownership than early career teachers, who are subjected to the *top-down* approach.

The following section describes one detailed model for selecting texts for English teachers.

2.6 A Model for Selecting Texts

Protherough (1983) is most useful in setting up a framework for selecting texts that teachers may use. He lists a series of questions (pp.167-168), broken down into five distinct categories which invite the teacher making the selection to consciously justify it in detail

over a variety of fronts (the complete list of questions is available for review in Appendix D). The 5 question categories are:

1. *The Teacher's Overall View of the Purposes of Reading Fiction*
2. *Literary Judgments*
3. *Awareness of Children's Tastes*
4. *Curricular Principles*
5. *Matching the Book and the Children*

(pp.167-168)

These five sections highlight Protherough's approach to text selection. A teacher begins by assessing their overall purposes of reading literature, and examines both the literary and pedagogical merits of the text. Furthermore a text must not only be aimed at a more general level of student interest, but must cater for the actual students being taught. In fact, in selecting texts, teachers need to value student opinion (Ivey and Broaddus 2001; Thomson, 1987), and pay close attention to the combined natures of the selection process and pedagogical implementation. Alvermann, Young, Green and Wisenbaker (1999) highlight that valuing student opinions beyond the realm of personal reading texts (as already recommended by Tucker, 1999) increases their connection and engagement with the text. This is also evident in Ivey and Broaddus's (2001) survey on what makes middle school students want to read, which concluded that although independent choice of reading materials in class may be difficult to put into practice, it should be encouraged by teachers as ultimately it is highly beneficial to reading motivation and improvement.

2.7 Teacher Curriculum Decision Making

Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics* separated knowledge in three distinct intellectual virtues: *episteme*, *techne* and *phronesis*¹. Although *episteme* and *techne* both have their equivalent today (*episteme* can be summed up as universal, invariable and context-independent knowledge, and *techne* has to do with craft, and pragmatic context-dependent production), *phronesis* is not so easily translatable, and yet it is extremely pertinent to the present study. It is the form of knowledge, the particular set of skills which allow us to make value judgments, and has as a point of departure for action what is good or bad for humans (Flyvbjerg, 2004). It is *phronesis* – this form of valuatory knowledge although often ignored and undervalued by the natural sciences – in which English teachers' professional lives take shape. Evidently teachers are also experts in their fields in both the *episteme* and *techne* forms of knowledge, but it is in their grasp of *phronesis* that they distinguish themselves from other occupations, venturing into territory once dominated by philosophers and theologians. It is here that English teachers enter a realm in which there is a deliberate questioning of values, balancing their personal needs with those of their students, and deciding what is *good* or *bad* for their particular classroom.

This decision making process can therefore be redefined as a value judgment process, in which teachers make use – at times successfully, and at others less so – of their *phronetic* ability to select the particular texts which are most useful, or worthwhile for their particular students, in their particular school, at a particular time. As outlined above *phronesis* is a form of context-dependent intellectual virtue, which not only allows teachers to select the most suitable texts for their specific context, but must by definition necessarily

¹ Space, time and the need to remain on the topic at hand do not allow a deeper analysis of Aristotle's intellectual virtues. They are included here in so far as certain aspects of his thought – be they simplified and in their most basic form – are relevant to the topic, particularly with regards to *Phronesis* and its role in the construction and assigning by teachers of value and worth. For a more detailed analysis see: Carnes Lord and David K. O'Connor, eds., *Essays on the Foundations of Aristotelian Political Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

imply that as the context changes (type of school, student ability, gender, age, etc...), their value-based decisions may consequently also shift and alter.

Phronesis, and thus teachers' value-based decisions although inherently influenced by a teacher's own preferences, cultural baggage, university formation and current literary theories cannot by definition be solely concerned with universals, but must also focus on the specific context's particulars.

As already highlighted in Chapter 1, understanding teacher curriculum decision making is relevant to the present research, as it is in the selection of texts for their classrooms that teachers exercise this crucial independence.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will identify the key research methods utilised for the process of recruiting participants, sample description, ethical considerations, the cycle of data gathering, and the nature of the co-constructed narratives and their interpretation.

The primary aim of the present research has been to investigate the factors limiting and guiding teachers in their selection of texts for their Stage 5 NSW English classrooms. The methodological approach of the present research is qualitative in nature, and takes the form of a case study involving a series of one-on-one interviews with four English teachers. Although somewhat limited in breadth, the case study was deemed to be the most appropriate line of inquiry for this particular research question.

The research is designed to construct four narratives which represent teachers' decision-making processes over a three-year teaching cycle. The methodology employed has been intentionally selected to both successfully facilitate the formulation of a series of context dependent narratives, and to be beneficial to the participants. The benefit to the four participants was aimed at empowering them as educators to take further active control of their professional lives (Vesper and Brock, 1991; Wolcott, 1994).

3.1.1 The Research Questions

Teachers' selection processes are influenced, limited and guided by a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which lead them to choose or reject particular texts for their classroom (Piccolo, 2009). Therefore, the guiding research questions for the collection of data are:

- *Why has this text been selected?*
- *Why is this text worth studying?*

3.2 Why a Case Study?

Teaching, although grounded in theory, is an occupation deeply dependent on the practicalities of the context. The study of educational theory, pedagogical models and philosophies must always recognise the inextricable nature of teaching practice and the context which generates it. Teachers do not just teach ‘students’, but *their* particular students with all their inherent differences in ability, culture, gender, age, domestic situation and personal psycho-social characteristics; they do not just practise in ‘schools’, but in *their* particular school, with its specific population, faculty policies, funding problems, intra/inter-faculty politics and parental involvement/control/censorship; they do not teach simply in a particular *place*, but in a particular *time*, in which socio-economic factors, the current political climate, globalisation and techno-digital developments all impact on the context in which they teach. All of the above influence to varying degrees the range of decisions available to them in their everyday teaching, and planning.

Recognition of the fact that teachers and teaching cannot be separated from a specific, local context, guides the methodological approach of the research. The methodology employed enables observation and interaction with the teachers concerned within their particular context. What is being investigated here is a *context-dependent decision*, and this must be reflected in the methodological approach. Flywbjerg (2001) defends the case study approach arguing that at the root of all studies of human interaction there is only “*context-dependent knowledge*” (p.221). It is the case study’s proximity to lived experience which allows it to generate advanced understanding. Faced with interpreting a

context-dependent decision, namely a teacher's selection of texts for his/her classroom, the case study allows us to gather *context-dependent knowledge*, gaining an in-depth understanding of the research focus.

Gaining concrete context-dependent knowledge is the central strength of the case study approach which redresses potential difficulties arising from attempting to generalise from the case study. In fact Flywbjerg (2006) states that:

Concrete context-dependent knowledge is more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals. (p.224)

The case study does not propose universal theories or generalisable conclusions. It aims to illuminate the complexities and nature of one specific instance of teaching and the nuances and drivers of one particular set of decisions. Research in social and political science is perhaps somewhat influenced by science – in the natural science sense – as it has come to overvalue the importance of generalisation as the ultimate goal of research, perhaps often undervaluing “the power of the best example” (Launsø and Rieper, 2005, p.15). Concrete context-dependent knowledge can provide this.

3.2.1 Context and Participant Empowerment

Educationally speaking, with the creation and establishment of the Australian Curriculum, Australia is at the dawn of a new era. Research in education that does not aim at influencing and informing the present state of affairs or its real-life context fails in making the link between “research and the world direct and consequential” (Flywbjerg, 2004, p.412). The present research investigates real-world decisions, by real-world teachers in real-world classrooms. Looking at what teachers are doing at the classroom level is of particular interest today, specifically as Australia moves towards implementing a nationwide curriculum.

Understanding the “interactive curriculum” (Jackson, 1968; Goodson, 2005) being implemented in classrooms is a useful indicator of the written curriculum’s efficacy. The case study’s proximity to reality and its focus on context-dependent knowledge provides ‘process’ knowledge that can be used “in a formative way to guide the development of competence among professionals” (Launsø and Rieper, 2006, p.9). In teaching terms and more importantly with regards to the present research, this “development of competence” which may stem from the closer-to-practice knowledge generated by the context-sensitive case study may assist teachers in becoming more aware of the factors influencing their selection of texts, and contribute to establishing a guide for the selection of texts in the early stages of implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

3.3 The Subjective Nature of Teacher Stories and Narrative Interpretation

The attempt to answer a research question by gathering teacher stories places the collected narratives within the field of the teachers’ own subjective life experiences. Bruner (1991) acknowledges that even though as sentient beings we tend to organise lived experiences mainly in narrative form, such organisation is subjective: lived experience can never be point-of-viewless. The micro-stories recounted by the participants, and the narratives stemming from their interview responses do not exist in a vacuum, but are shaped by “lifelong personal and community narratives” (Bell, 2002, p.208).

The stories formed by the teachers’ conscious recount of events serve to represent a version of their subjective reality which captures and reflects the interpretation the participants have of themselves. This interpretation of reality rejects and excludes

experiences undermining the teachers' claimed identities (Bell, 2002). These narratives can only ever achieve what Bruner (1991) calls "verisimilitude" (p.4). They are a version of reality recounted through the interpretative lens of the teachers' own histories, personalities, contexts, backgrounds, dispositions and particular mood during the interview session. In fact, although the research deals with classroom practices and the realities of the lived teaching experience, the participants' students were not interviewed, as the subjective reality of the teachers seen through the interpretative lens of the researcher was the only reality sought. What was aimed for was a collaborative construction of knowledge (Clark, 2001, p.1).

Since the narratives only represent and construct the reality experienced by the four individual teachers participating in the research, the subjective nature of the teachers' stories must be acknowledged. Furthermore, the researcher's own interpretation of the teachers' stories and interview responses, and the narrative construction itself are also self-evidently subjective. In interpreting teacher stories the interviewer is creating meaning from the narrative record of their lived experiences (Bell, 2002), and thus the narratives themselves can never be free of the subjective nature of his own interpretative assumptions, biases and perspectives. This subjective interpretation is also by no means the only one possible as other readers and/or researchers may interpret (indeed *will* interpret) the narratives differently from the author.

The research does not intend to generalise from the results, or formulate universal theories based on the teacher stories. The research wants to collect and retell the subjective experiences of four NSW teachers of Stage 5 English, in their quest for an ideal process and criteria for text selection. It is their voices and only theirs that the narratives attempt to make *resonate*.

The following section outlines the interpretative paradigm employed in the collaborative construction of the narratives.

3.4 Assumptions and theory guiding the analysis and interpretation of the data

The interpretative paradigm employed stems from the idea that meaning and knowledge cannot exist as overarching truths, but rather that they are constructed and re-constructed continually through experience. Constructivism acknowledges the social construction of knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 2000) based on “individual reconstructions coalescing around a consensus” (p.166).

In interviewing four teachers, the aim was to facilitate the “co-construction of knowledge between researcher and researched” (Clark, 2001, p.1). This interactionism defines the interpretative paradigm, which implies that the knowledge emerging in the interviews is – to a certain extent – not discovered, but rather created by the researcher. Interpretation and knowledge in a constructivist paradigm is a collective process, in which narratives are always under construction and continually revised (Heikkinen, 2002), in what Conelly and Clandinin (1990) describe as a joint inter-subjective understanding of experience. The research rests on the assumption that there is no “single, dominant or static reality, but rather a number of realities” (Moen, 2006, p.5). Knowledge is relative, and although verisimilitude and a certain authentic view of reality can be achieved, constructivism denies the possibility of capturing the objective reality.

Seen in the light of constructivism’s subjectivist epistemology and its relativist ontology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.21), the four teacher narratives constructed in this research do not (cannot) claim to represent the “truth” since, in a constructivist paradigm, the question of the *story* being *true* is far from relevant. There being no static or everlasting

truth, the *story* becomes valuable in so much as it captures how meaning is created and assigned by the participants presenting a particular subjective view of an experience.

Once this point-of-view laden experience is recorded as a narrative, it ceases to be tied to the moment in which it took place. Liberated from its origin, the narrative can now be interpreted in a variety of ways, assuming meanings for which it was never intended. Moen (2006) summarises this ongoing hermeneutic process as follows:

interpretation starts immediately when one story is selected out of any number of other possible stories, and it continues during the entire research process...The researcher and the research subjects participate in this interpretative process during the entire research period...the interpretation does not end with the finished research report. Quite the contrary, the final narrative opens for a wide range of interpretations by others who read and hear about the report. (p.7)

The conclusions and reflections extrapolated from the inter-subjectively constructed narratives are but one possible interpretation among many. The constructivist approach allows the researcher to focus on each individual teacher story as an independent unit, rather than trying to coalesce the four narratives into a single truth-bearing story.

The methodology employed in the present research took form as a direct response to the research questions which seek to understand how and why teachers select texts for their English classrooms. As outlined in Chapter 1.2, the answers to the research questions are to be found in the interactive curriculum (Jackson, 1968; Goodson, 2005), and as such the most clear-cut method of gaining insight into the selection process was to speak to the teachers themselves in a series of one-on-one interviews. Callingham (2010) states that:

it is quality teachers, making rapid professional judgements on the run in busy classrooms that create the 'meanings and consequences' that affect children's interest and involvement. (pp.41-42)

The data collected in the interviews was developed into four teacher narratives of selection, aimed at expressing and communicating effectively the experiences of the teachers themselves.

3.4.1 Why a Narrative

The field of narrative inquiry is not new and has been used successfully in such disciplines as Management and Organisational Studies, Anthropology, Gender Studies, Medicine, History, Psychoanalysis, Art, Multimedia (particularly Virtual Reality environments), Museum Studies, Sociology, Literary Theory, Law, Cultural Studies, New Media Theory, and Teaching (Clandinin, 2007; Hazel, 2007). Its growing importance as a research methodology rests on its ability to open up possibilities for new ways of thinking, particularly about the relationship between the particular and the universal, the micro and the macro (Franzosi, 1998; Coulter and Smith, 2009). It is the ability that narrative has to offer manageable views of human complexity through the retelling of stories of human experience as well as its suitability at presenting multiple perspectives fostering multiple interpretations (Smith, 2009) which makes it so useful to the present research.

While recounting his experience with literature and stories John Paul Sartre in his autobiographical work *The Words* (1964) argues that people are and always have been tellers of tales, and that we live surrounded by tales: ours and those of others. Levi-Strauss (1972) believes that narrative is and has always been a constant and basic form of human expression, while Barthes (1977) goes even further and states that:

the narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories.

Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's Saint Ursula), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (p.79)

This all encompassing nature of the narrative described by Barthes is also brought forward by Ursula K. Le Guin (1979) when she states that a person who has

never listened to nor read a tale or myth or parable or story...would not know quite fully what it is to be human. For the story – from *Rumpelstiltskin* to *War and Peace* – is one of the basic tools invented by the mind of man, for the purpose of gaining understanding. There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories. (p.31)

Narratives in various forms play an important role throughout the history of human civilisation. But what exactly is a narrative?

Labov defined it as a “method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (1972, p.359). Toolan more simply states that a narrative is in fact simply a “perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events” (1988, p.52-3). *Sequence* and *Events* are two key terms here which help ground narrative into its two major components: chronological temporality (temporal succession) and causality. Narrative organises a sequence of events

into a chronological whole, relating them to each other, and linking prior decisions to subsequent events so that each event may be understood through its causal relation to the whole (Eliot, 2005).

The importance of chronology in narrative is well documented and established (Tomashevski, 1965; Labov, 1972; Cohan and Shires, 1988; Rimmon-Kenan, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1995), but not all temporally ordered events necessarily form a narrative. In his *Poetics* Aristotle highlighted the great difference between events happening *because* of one another, and simply *after* one another (Franzosi, 1998). In fact a sequence of events becomes a narrative when these events lead characters/participants from one situation to another through direct causal links. “The elements [of a story] are related [not] only by *succession*; ... they are also related by *transformation*” (Todorov, 1990, p.30). This process of transformation grounded in time is *real* and *really* occurring in a particular social context. Narrative texts allow a deep understanding of the interrelation between individual lives and social contexts, and it is in this interrelation that meaning within the temporal dimension is derived: narrative creates meaning by accessing the cultural context the story takes place in.

3.4.2 Analysis of Narrative Vs Narrative Analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) defined two basic forms of narrative inquiry, using similar words, but describing two semantically different concepts: Analysis of Narrative and Narrative Analysis. The differences between these two forms of inquiry are far greater than the similarities in their names imply. The first includes all research aimed at analysing existing narratives into categories and themes; narratives are examined and data is extracted from the narratives.

The present research is concerned with the latter of the two, the Narrative Analysis. The three interview sessions are aimed at the creation of narratives as a representation of the research study. Narrative Analysis uses stories as a way of knowing; stories emerge from the data collected and are in turn framed and depicted through an analytical process which is both artistic and rigorous (Coulter and Smith, 2009). Polkinghorne (1995) states that this form of inquiry includes all “studies whose data consists of actions, events and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories” (p.6). In the current research, evidence is generated through the interviews with the participating teachers; the narrative analysis – or narrative construction – consists in rendering the results of the research (participant interviews) in narrative form, in which “the researcher balances the interests of storytelling against the inclusion of every detail uncovered in her research” (Coulter and Smith, 2009, p.587). This “*reworking, rendering, or crafting*” (p.587) of the gathered data into a temporally consistent and contextually valid *scholarly, investigative* and *artistic* piece of narrative writing is the final aim of the present research.

If the narrative is to be constructed based on chronology and causal sequence, the researcher/interviewer/author must use these two basic narrative functions wisely in order to produce a worthwhile story which will be by necessity and definition only a rendition of *perceived* events, formulated through the selection of particular chosen parts of *life*. One cannot and need not include everything in the narrative; the *balancing act* mentioned by Coulter and Smith (2009) is crucial to developing the narrative.

Turner and Bruner (2001) in *The Anthropology of Experience* differentiate between *experience*, and *an experience*, where the former is simply the “passive acceptance and endurance of events”, while the latter stands out from the plainness of being “like a rock in a Zen sand garden” (p.35). The constructed narrative must distinguish between these two forms of *experience*, selecting relevant ones and sequencing them in a valid order. This

process of *selection* and *sequencing* is what makes this form of Narrative Analysis a subjective process. No matter what may actually have happened, only the experiences directly relevant to the point of the narrative need be *selected* and included. The same can be said of the process of *sequencing*, as the subjective nature of temporal experience allows the researcher/interviewer/author to *sequence* the experiences in an infinite number of ways, always depending on the message the narrator is trying to express, no longer being tied down by what C.S. Lewis (1958) calls “the tyranny, the unilinear poverty” (p.114) of time.

Seen in this light, the selection of particular events, and the way these are temporally presented in the narrative is dependent on the point of view adopted by the narrator. Narrative Analysis is more a reflection “*on* – not *of* – the world as it is known” (Riessman, 2008, p.188). A Narrative analysis reveals “the subjective experience of participants” as they interpret – together with the researcher/interviewer/author – the “events and conditions of their everyday lives” (Coulter and Smith, 2009, p.578). This collaborative interpretation of events retrospectively looks for the connections between experiences formulating meaning.

So why a narrative? The retelling of a contextualised temporal experience in the form of a story provides insight into our understanding of the world around us, allowing us to discern the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates:

A narrative is reality reconfigured in order to create meaning. (Hazel, 2007, p.2)

All research is aimed at creating/generating/finding meaning. Jung (2005) once said that “the least of things with a meaning is worth more in life than the greatest of things without it” (p.67). The use of the methodological approach of the Narrative Analysis aimed at constructing a worthwhile story out of the participant interviews allows us to

create/generate/find meaning in the individual teacher experiences. It is a scholarly/investigative/artistic endeavour whose actual execution answers the research questions.

3.4.3 Writing the Narratives

The interview recordings were listened to, organised, annotated and all sections transcribed. Following chronology and the themes arising in each of the three interview sessions, the narratives were constructed by simply keeping relevant teacher utterances and removing the interviewer's comments, questions and interruptions. Sections of the interviews were amalgamated, but there was no cross-over between the interview sessions. This resulted in a quasi stream-of-consciousness narrative in the first person.

The first person perspective was chosen as it provides a sense of nearness to the action, and allows the narratives to remain as faithful as possible to the actual words spoken by the teachers themselves. The transcripts were only modified when responses required further explanations to be understood. This was the case in some instances where the answers made reference to the question or other interviewer comments.

The following section outlines the methodological features of the research.

3.5 Collecting and Analysing Data

3.5.1 Establishing Contact and Choosing Teachers/Participants

The research sample was limited to four so as to allow a deeper insight into their particular stories, and facilitate the construction of manageable narratives. The teachers came from varied teaching contexts: a Sydney Diocese Catholic Education Office all boy

School; Sydney Independent all girl School; an all boy NSW Public School; a co-educational NSW Selective Public School. Two of the teachers were experienced or head-teachers, while the other two had been teaching for less than five years.

This mix of educational contexts and teaching experience was chosen to help create possible contrasts in the narratives as the teachers came to terms with different professional expectations at various points in their careers.

The four teachers in this study each teach in schools in NSW, but this by no means implies that their contexts are identical. Clearly some aspects of their individual situations may be similar (e.g. the Syllabus is the same across the state), but the schools involved, the socio-economic population, parental expectations, religious beliefs, geographical position, and the work environment all make their contexts unique.

Since the case study methodology is not interested in producing generalisations, but in highlighting particulars and exalting the *best example*, the teachers were selected using an Information-Oriented Selection process (Flywbjerg, 2006). The teachers were not randomly selected but were individually chosen “on the basis of expectations about their information content” (p.230). The participating teachers were chosen because their personal teaching experiences and teaching locations were deemed to be the most suitable in helping to establish a range of narrative responses.

Information-Oriented Selection (IOS) allows a case study to collect a significant quantity of useful information from a relatively small sample. The success of an IOS ultimately rests on the researcher’s personal judgement in selecting participants who – in simple terms – have *something* to say. The four teachers participating in the present research were selected from teachers known to the author personally, or recommended by other experts to him through academic networking.

The recruitment of the participants was straightforward as all teachers approached were not only available and willing to be interviewed but all believed in the importance of establishing the *hows* and *whys* of text selection.

3.5.2 Participant Schools

Table 3.1 summarises the participant schools. The table contains data regarding the type of school, its particular focus, number of enrolments, percentage of the Indigenous population and its ICSEA² score.

Table 3.1 - Participant Schools

<u>School</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Mission/Focus</u>	<u>Enrolments</u>	<u>Indigenous Population</u>	<u>ICSEA</u>
A	Secondary Sydney Diocese CEO School for boys.	Educational excellence, through the establishment of an inclusive faith community. Particular focus on music and the performing arts	700	1%	1083
B	Secondary Government school for boys.	Combination of personal tuition and small classes to form well-rounded young men. Particular focus on sporting success.	450	0%	1105

² From <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au>: The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a measure that enables meaningful comparisons to be made across schools. It has been developed specifically for the My School website and measures key factors that correlate with educational outcomes.

C	Non-government Independent Catholic Day and Boarding secondary school for girls.	The values of compassion and justice. Particular focus on the appreciation of beauty and cultural plurality.	800	5%	1083
D	Selective co-educational secondary Government school.	Multiculturalism and academic excellence. Particular focus on innovative leadership using the dynamic High Resolves program	750	0%	1081

3.5.3 Participant Teachers: Michael; David; Anna; Troy

Michael (School A) is the most experienced teacher in the sample having held the position of English coordinator in numerous schools in NSW. At present he is the coordinator in the school, having moved to the school during the first year of the interview cycle. He is in charge of a mostly female, fairly young and inexperienced staff. He has been teaching for 18 years, and has taught Stage 5 classes almost every year for that entire period. He was teaching one Year 10 class during the interview period.

David (School B) has been teaching for 16 years and is a well-liked and highly respected teacher in his school. He has regularly taught Stage 5 English throughout his career, and was teaching a Year 9 and a Year 10 class during the interview period. He is not at present the subject coordinator, but his experience allows him to work somewhat more independently than other teachers using his personal professional discretion when distancing himself from the faculty programs and guidelines.

Anna (School C) is the only female teacher in the sample and has been teaching for 4 years. School A is the first school she has taught at. She has taught Stage 5 every year, mainly

Year 9 English, with only one Year 10 class to date. During the interview period she was teaching one Year 9 class, having taught both Year 9 and 10 classes the previous year.

Troy (School D) has been teaching for 5 years, and School D is the first school he has taught at. During the interview period he was teaching a Year 9 and a Year 10 class, and he has taught both classes every previous year except once where he only taught Year 9. Although he has only been teaching for a brief time, the faculty and head teacher situations in his school allow him extensive freedom in his professional choices.

3.5.4 Research Participant Sample Summary

The composite nature of the sample and the similar ICSEA of the four schools involved allow the research to compare text-selection influences across school systems. The stratified selection based on teaching experience will provide a cross section of teachers working in NSW. Lastly, the inclusion of all girl, all boy and one co-educational school may also provide an insight into the way student gender influences teacher text selection.

3.5.5 Recording Process

The interviews were recorded using digital recording equipment as simple written descriptions of oral interviews run the risk of missing relevant points simply because of their inability to process the data quickly enough. In fact from the very beginnings of recorded interview methodology, comparisons of recorded interviews with written ones indicated that a remarkably large quantity of material is lost in written ones (Bucher, Fritz, Quarantelli, 1956).

Recorded interviews allow the researcher to focus his attention on the interview at hand. This frees the researcher from the most basic form of data analysis occurring when certain utterances are recorded as they appear particularly interesting, and others which may be equally or more important are not recorded simply because their importance was not acknowledged at the time (Hancock, 1998). Recorded interviews make the listening and re-listening of the raw material possible, allowing for a deeper assessment and reassessment of the attributed relevance given to particular utterances over others.

Audio recordings were chosen over video recordings even though the latter may provide additional useful non-verbal cues. Video recording instruments placed in the physical location of the interviews (cramped co-ordinator offices, teacher desks in staff rooms, small staff common rooms) would undoubtedly have exacerbated participant self-awareness and discomfort resulting in what Hancock describes as affected behaviour and responses. All extra-auditory responses were sacrificed for the additional sense of *normality* – sought after in semi-structured interviews – afforded by the absence of video recording equipment. The small inconspicuous nature of the digital audio recorder facilitates the creation of a relaxed environment conducive to the conversation-like disclosure aimed for during the interviews.

3.5.6 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate data-gathering tool for the present research, as they facilitated the collection of a large quantity of information. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allows for a series of common generalised issues on a range of topics to be addressed. This process of questioning permits the participants not only to extend their responses, but allows the researcher to stimulate further discussion by unplanned questioning (Burns, 2000). If at any time during the interview process the participants brought forward a topic or raised an issue which was not

intended, but could have possibly extended insights into and further addressed the aims of the research, such discussion was allowed and guided by the interviewer.

At the practical level the research itself involves three one-on-one taped interviews with each teacher. Later in the thesis the individual interviews in the series will be looked at and the aim of each particular one explained, but first since it is just as important in the present case study, the actual interview schedule itself and the reasoning behind it needs to be examined.

When committing to a case study, aimed at collecting large quantities of complex context-dependent knowledge of a qualitative nature, the problem of how to work through, analyse and make use of the data in a constructive way is often at the forefront of a researcher's mind. In fact when preparing the present research, the interviews were carefully designed to facilitate the *intended* analytical work on the gathered data. In perhaps simpler terms, what this means is that the totality of the data-gathering process, including planned and un-planned questions, number of interviews, number and order of questions, and the interview schedule all help not only in collecting *relevant* data, but just as importantly *workable* data that can be used to generate useful conclusions based on the particulars of the *best example*.

Since the collected data was to be used to create a *narrative of selection*, the interviews needed to be structured and scheduled in order to create the fundamental requirement of any narrative, be it fictional or factual: chronology. The interviews aim to establish a *narrative of selection* based on a *chronology of teaching*. Once again this highlights the context-dependent knowledge the research is attempting to collect, which is not only present in a specific place and a specific time, but also governed by the specific chronological sequence of a typical teaching cycle.

Having recognised the importance of establishing a chronological base for the construction of a narrative, the research methodology must in turn reflect this. The interviews accompany the four teachers all the way through a typical teaching cycle. The teachers are interviewed as they select texts to be taught, teach the texts, and finally reflect on their selections and proceed once more to select new texts for the following year. This cycle can be seen in Fig. 3.1:

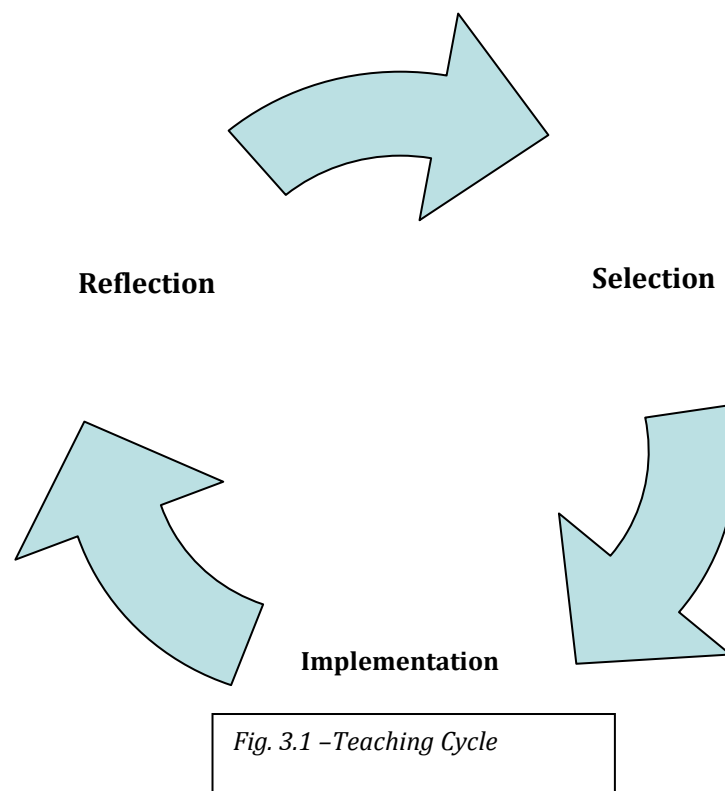


Figure 3.1 graphically shows a typical teaching cycle, from selection to reflection. It is this cycle which provides the chronological basis of the narrative, and it is the interviews themselves which help establish the chronological nature of the selection process. The cyclical nature of the selection process should in theory allow teachers to continually review and improve their selection strategies based on their reflection.

The interview schedule and general topics covered for each interview are set out in table 3.2:

<p><u>Interview 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General biographical and professional history; - Initial opinions, views and personal theories concerning the selection of texts; - Types of texts taught; - Practical process of text selection and professional independence; - Process of assigning value and worth; - All texts taught the previous year (2009); - For each text selected: Why? How? By Whom? Number of times taught? Evaluation of teaching experience. 	Term 1 2010
<p><u>Interview 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List compiled of all texts taught so far this year; - For each text the teachers express: <i>Justification</i> of selection; <i>Judgement</i> on value; <i>Evaluation</i> of usefulness; <i>Assessment</i> of successful achievement of planned outcomes; <i>Appraisal</i> of operationalisation of original pedagogical intention; <i>Prediction</i> of future use in the classroom; - List compiled of all other text that will be taught in following terms; - For each text selected: Why? How? By Whom? Number of times taught? Focus on planned intentions and pedagogic hopes and goals; - Global and individual factors limiting, guiding and influencing text selection. 	Term 2-3 2010
<p><u>Interview 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examination of all texts taught in 2010, comparing planned intentions and pedagogic goals with real-life outcomes; - Past selection justifications are re-assessed in light of last year's experiences with each text; - List compiled of texts taught so far and planned texts, and selection criteria examined; - Changes in teaching contexts examined. 	Term 1 2011

Table 3.2 – Interview Schedule

Each particular interview will be looked at in more detail, as an introduction to the narrative sections derived from it.

3.5.7 Research Logs

One of the most recognised tools in the qualitative researcher's kit is the research log. This log keeps the researcher's thoughts, observations and research question developments. It is here that interview dates, pre-interview observations, interesting sections of the interviews, quick quotes, context descriptions, and un-recorded conversations were recorded. More importantly this was used to record post-interview observations which were used to formulate future interview questions and as a framework for the narrative constructions.

MacLean and Mohr (1999) suggest the following types of research log entries:

- Descriptions of events and interactions in the classroom;
- Quotations, phrases, conversations;
- Surprising, confusing events or statements;
- Reflections on observations, tentative theories, assumptions;
- Thoughts about the research process — what's working, what isn't?

3.5.8 Recording Descriptions/Analysis

The recordings were listened to and all sections described and organised into themes in preparation for the construction of the narratives. The author is the only person who has listened to the recordings, and they will be securely kept for five years so as to allow verification of the study's findings and conclusions.

The interviews accompany the teachers around a typical teaching cycle, and since the narratives aim to present this, the interviews were organised according to chronology. The research looks at texts selected over three years (2009, 2010, and 2011), and the

recordings were compiled into sub-themes within the particular year being examined. The narratives were constructed year by year, examining each type of text within that temporal context.

3.6 Ethical considerations

3.6.1 Ethics

As required, ethics approval was requested from the Human Ethics committee of the University of Sydney and granted on April 12 2010. Since the research was to be conducted in both Sydney Diocese CEO Schools and in New South Wales state schools, ethics applications were submitted to the Department of Education and Training and the CEO offices. Ethics approval was granted by the DET on April 23 2010 and by the Sydney Diocese CEO on May 5 2010. Approval to conduct research in the independent school in the study was granted by the principal on May 3 2010.

All participants were first approached via email, and provided with a participant information sheet. Once they had expressed their willingness to participate, consent forms were also provided and signed. Both information and consent forms underlined the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences, and this was further reinforced verbally before the first interview session. Nevertheless no participant asked to withdraw from the study and none expressed difficulties with the interview process.

3.6.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

In order to give teachers complete freedom to express at times sensitive information and to maintain participant anonymity, participant names have been changed and schools have been assigned alphabetical names. School and context descriptions do not specifically locate schools aside from generalising on wider metropolitan areas. Reiss (1979) holds that “the single most likely cause of harm in social inquiry” (p.73) is the disclosure of participant identities, and the interview process and narrative constructions cater for this need.

Nevertheless as with any small study although the teachers themselves may not be identifiable, the schools could be identified if one were so inclined, and insiders may decipher pseudonyms and camouflaged locations (Christians, 2005). However although the issue of confidentiality was discussed with the participants, the teachers themselves communicated no excessive desire for anonymity, with all four dismissing the need for pseudonyms. Therefore although participant anonymity is ensured only to a certain extent, since the teachers themselves were not troubled by this there is no ethical concern.

All recordings, participant consent forms and field notes will be kept in the supervisor’s office in a locked drawer for a suitable period to ensure confidentiality and confirmability.

3.6.3 Validity and Transferability

The constructed narratives are a fruit of three interviews, with each interview not only following on from the previous, but also looking back on the previous and re-assessing and re-examining preceding participant responses. The teachers were given opportunities to review their responses to both clarify and confirm them. This process was essential in order to validate the teacher narratives. This process of participant review re-enforced an essential

component of the research methodology's epistemology, namely that meaning and truths are constructed by the researcher in concomitance with the participants themselves. The validity of the narratives is based on a "communicative and pragmatic concept" of validity (Rorty, 1979), created by means of a collaborative multi-voice narrative.

Transferability is the term Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest should replace the concept of reliability in qualitative research, suggesting it is a far more useful concept in developing a research design. In fact, the credibility of the research rests heavily on transferability, as Anderson (2002) highlights:

the credibility of the research lies in the authenticity and clarity of the teachers' voices, and their transferability, creating knowledge that leads to a deeper understanding of the research questions. (p.105)

The constructed narratives achieve validity, reliability and credibility to the extent in which they make the stories richly *resonate* with meaningful lived experiences (Goodfellow, 1997).

3.7 Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of the present study have already been glanced at throughout this methodological chapter. These include the limited sample size and the subjective nature of the teacher narratives. In this section I will highlight the two remaining limitations: limited perspective and the non-generalisable nature of the results.

3.7.1 Limited Perspective

The research is reliant on the teachers' multiple stories, from their multiple points of view, in their own words without other external input or testimonies. The teachers

themselves expound on the texts they have selected, explaining the reasons why they believe each particular text is worth teaching. Colleagues, superiors, students and parents' point of views are not included in the narratives. The research is interested in how and why teachers select texts to be taught, nevertheless it acknowledges the added richness which multiple perspectives could provide particularly with regards to the teachers' intended pedagogic outcomes, and the real classroom experiences described by their students.

The research focuses on the lived experiences of only four teachers, and does not attempt to capture the selection strategies of all NSW teachers. The study also focuses only on Stage 5 and although the justification of this choice has been previously provided, the fact that other factors may influence teachers in other Stages must be acknowledged.

Nevertheless there are significant insights to be gained from the present study notwithstanding the limitations in perspective and sample size.

3.7.2 Non-Generalisable

The present study has never claimed to be interested in establishing universal truths. The study aims to collect four individual and unique teacher stories and wishes to highlight the *best example* in their lived experiences through the use of narratives. The strength of the narratives is in their ability to *resonate* and create emotional and emphatic responses in the reader and more specifically in other teachers.

3.8 Conclusion

The methodology employed in this study was aimed at collecting relevant teacher stories and use these to generate *resonating* narratives capable of highlighting the process of teacher text selection in all its facets.

The narratives directly answer the research questions in the teachers' own voices. These narratives constructed on a co-operative generation of knowledge will "encourage teachers to look very closely at the problem of educating creatively and engender new hope about the importance of teachers' work" (Preskill, 1998, p.344) by portraying protagonists that

grapple with all of the difficulties that make teaching in contemporary schools so daunting, but... [highlighting] ...the imagination and commitment of teachers who see possibility in the most trying of circumstances. They reaffirm the role that teachers can play in humanizing and democratizing students and in unleashing their ability to make a difference in the world. Furthermore, these teaching narratives are guides to living well. They show that fostering student growth necessitates that teachers experience their own ongoing self-development. (p.344)

The present case study approach is purposely aimed at cooperatively investigating meaning through the interpretation of the events and conditions of everyday life (Coulter and Smith, 2009). This is achieved through the construction of the often-mentioned teacher narratives: the narratives themselves answer the "how and why" of teacher text selection that make up the research questions. This narrative analysis thus becomes not only a data collection and organization tool, but rather the answer to the research itself. This distinction is important, as the narratives - which include twelve interviews following four teachers over a three-year teaching cycle - may also succeed in developing not only answers but a large quantity of further questions warranting additional examination and analysis. These additional queries although significant must not divert attention from the central focus of the research, but rather should be considered as constructive avenues for future research.

This methodological framework provides the researcher with an organizational structure designed to be responsive to analysis. The value of the present methodological

framework is precisely that it allows for a very close reading and analysis of the short teacher narratives. These narratives are meaning generating structures, and their greatest potential is realized when they are preserved almost entirely as they are presented. When allowed to remain whole and not be fragmented and recomposed, the narratives respect the participants' ways of constructing meaning. It is then the researcher's role to analyse and discover this meaning (Kohler Riessman 1993).

Detractors of the Narrative will see weakness in the methodology adopted since they will assess it using familiar content-analysis concepts, looking for such key-words as *objective, systematic, scientific, quantitative, replicable*, and they will come up empty handed. What is to be found is a more open text; a scientific text that is "open to the conditions of its own production (Franzosi, 1998, p.549). The strength of the Narrative is in its approach to the relationship between the particular and the universal. By portraying experience, by questioning common understandings, it attempts to enable the reader to look at educational phenomena with "renewed interest and a more questioning stance" (Coulter and Smith, 2009, p.3). Narrative causes

us to question our values, prompts new imaginings of the ideal and the possible. It can even stir action against the conventional, the seemingly unquestionable, the tried and true (Barone, 2001, p.736).

These present narrative accounts are renderings of the research results (data is collected, presented and analysed). It appeals to the reader who recognizes the familiar story forms. It reconciles research's *reason* with experience's *emotion*, bringing these two parts of human experience together (Novitz, 1997). More importantly, they fulfil the needs of the present thesis by answering the central research questions meaningfully.

The next chapter will begin to present the first four co-constructed narratives based on the recordings of the first of the three interviews with each of the four teacher participants. The narratives are accompanied by an analysis of each teacher's selection process for the particular year being investigated (2009).

Chapter 4 – First Interview

Initial Teacher Impressions on Text Selection; The Practical Process of Text Selection; The First Narrative of Selection

4.1 The Narratives

In the following three chapters, the individual teacher narratives will be constructed by focusing on the responses of the four participants in successive interviews. The data is presented in terms of each interview session, as set out in Table 4.1 below:

	Part 1	Part 2
Interview 1 Chapter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Personal/Initial Impressions.- Practical Process of Text Selection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Narrative of Selection 2009.
Interview 2 Chapter 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Teacher Text Selection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Narrative of Selection 2010.
Interview 3 Chapter 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Development of Original Impressions.- Changes in Teaching Contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Narrative of Selection 2011.

Table 4.1 – Overview of Process of Narrative Construction

Each teacher's narrative has been presented in a different font colour to facilitate recognition as follows: Michael (Blue), David (Red), Anna (Green), Troy (Purple).

4.2 The Interview

The first interview was perhaps the most challenging interview in the series for a variety of reasons. Although the interviewer was known to three of the participants, and had previously been introduced to the fourth participant, both the researcher and the teachers were unfamiliar with the new dynamics of the interviewer and interviewee relationship. Although all participants had agreed to be involved in the research, not all were originally convinced of the relevance of the particular topic that was to be discussed. Additionally, of those who believed the topic at hand to be of value, none had previously considered or reflected on their process of text selection in an explicit and systematic way. The purpose of the first interview then, was to attempt to create a good rapport between the researcher and the teachers being interviewed, so as not to interpret the questions being asked as a form of “checking-up” on teacher practice. It was made clear from the start that what was being conducted was an *investigation*, and not an *assessment*. This was done to avoid “this-is-what-you’d-like-to-hear” responses and examine what the teachers being interviewed were actually practicing. To achieve this, the initial questions aimed to highlight the importance of individual teacher tastes, ideas and value judgements.

In addition to collecting a large quantity of initial data on text selection, the first interview was designed to foster an atmosphere in which the teachers could feel that their quotidian classroom practice and decisions were not only highly valued, but relevant and worth noting. The first half of the interview in fact begins as a broadly based conversation on teaching experience, focusing on Stage 5 teaching experience and initial opinions, views and personal theories concerning the selection of texts. The types of texts taught in this particular stage are examined, as well as the actual practical process of text selection in their particular school and the levels of teacher independence in selecting texts, differentiating

between the longer texts available in the school book-room and AV departments, and the shorter texts available online and from newspapers or magazines.

The first half of the interview continues by introducing the teachers to the idea that in selecting texts, teachers are continuously either consciously or tacitly making value judgements about the suitability and worthiness for study of particular texts. They are asked to explain if this assigning of worth is based on a system of universal values based on a Cultural Heritage Model of literature or if this is a context dependent value focused on reaching specific educational goals with a particular class of students (as examined in Chapter 2). This is done by differentiating between the concepts of universal value and worth, contrasted with the concepts of contextualised usefulness and usability, and examining the way the assigning of value changes with different types of texts.

The first interview starts to scrutinise the actual texts taught to Stage 5 by the teachers in the previous year (2009). The interview questions probe the types of texts individually, asking what novels, drama/Shakespeare, poetry, non-fiction, films, and everyday texts were selected, and more importantly: why? For each text taught, the teacher was asked to explain the reasons for selection; if it had been selected by them; if he/she had taught it before; why they considered the text worth studying (or why not); and if they believed the text had been successful in achieving the aims it had been selected for, and if not, why?

This first interview was conducted at the beginning of a school year, and allowed the teachers to reflect on the experience of the previous year and begin to think through the beliefs that may be shaping their selection of texts. This self-reflexive capacity, in which teachers re-assess their previous decisions, is a key element of successful teacher work. Thus understanding this process was an essential part of the interview as it prepared the teachers for the second session in which the current year they were teaching would be examined.

4.3 Michael's First Interview Part 1

Part 1 of the analysis of the first interview deals with the teachers' initial ideas, impressions and personal theories guiding them in their selection process, as well as examining the actual practical process of text selection in their individual school environments.

4.3.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement with a Text

Michael's almost 20 years of teaching experience led him to conclude that the level of student engagement with a text is paramount and this is always at the forefront of his selection strategies. Michael's definition of 'engaging' texts, are those that while being both achievable and challenging can also *"really stay with them and (that) they can remember even beyond school"*. He believes that the most engaging texts for boys in Stage 5 are

those that deal with personal relationships, and portray them in some way that is not ordinary or obvious. The kids engage with this idea of finding and building positive relationships, because they are becoming relational beings themselves as they mature through school.

This comment highlights Michael's belief in the formative nature of subject English. His reliance on a Personal Growth model of English (as described in Chapter 2) comes to the forefront as he discusses the role of literature and subject English in the personal development of the students. Michael's Growth-derived selection strategies are even more evident when he states that his selections are not guided by *"language development, but personal development."* In fact the topics he believes engage students in Stage 5 are *"justice and discrimination"* as *"every kid in school at that age is starting to care about things like*

racism, world hunger and poverty.” This focus on the *real* and real-world problems begins to position Michael in the *Liberal* group of teachers as defined by Marshall (2000), since as a group these teachers tend to look for literature of

social realism...because they consider that while style and aesthetic value are significant, they are less important than the content or message in the teaching of English as a school subject. (Marshall, 2000, p.91)

These topics can be found in texts originating from all parts of the world, and must be pitched at the ability level of the students being taught. Selecting texts by international authors translated into English also allows Michael to increase the chances that his students haven’t encountered these texts before, and that they approach them with an open mind.

4.3.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School A

The practical process of text selection in School A situates Michael in a context he describes as bizarre and unusual. He is a Head Teacher who has very limited freedom in what he can, or more precisely *should* teach his Stage 5 English classes. The first interview took place in Michael’s first year at the school and he joined a faculty whose general principles differed greatly from his own. This differing view was largely focussed on the role of the individual teacher and his/her freedom in selecting texts for their own classroom. He described his situation by stating that he is “*pretty much locked in with regards to what (he) can teach.*”

The programming for the current year had been undertaken the previous year without him, and has placed him in a difficult position since he does not want to teach the texts that have been selected, but is loath to offend or anger his new colleagues. He was

deeply unsatisfied with the way the text selection process worked in the school, particularly with the fact that they

all teach the same texts, particularly with the longer texts. So I didn't really have a choice with what Shakespeare I teach, or what novels, since they had already been selected without me.

He distinguishes between *longer* and *shorter* texts, saying that he enjoyed more freedom with the shorter texts, which might be taught in a single lesson, or used as supportive texts, or used simply to explain a quick single point.

Teacher independence with text selection in School A was quite limited, as *"there is no list to choose from (and) everyone has to do the same text."* In fact, at the practical level in School A there is quite a lot of programming, regulating what texts are taught, in what specific units, and at what moment in the year. Michael believed this system to be quite limiting and already in his first term at the school was attempting to challenge it. He described the program as being written not *"necessarily (by) the most experienced teachers, just the ones willing to do some extra work in their own time."*

What this resulted in – in his opinion – was the creation of a very strict and prescriptive program suitable for beginning teachers who haven't yet developed the skills to successfully select their own texts, but very limiting for the more experienced teachers like himself. He distances himself from this way of doing things stating that as a Head Teacher he does

not like imposing texts on other teachers. [He likes] each teacher choosing their own text, maybe with some guidelines, but not as a law coming down from above.

The reason why he is such a firm believer in teacher independence in the selection of texts is the conviction that no one is more in tune with their own students' ability levels, interests

and needs than the specific classroom teachers themselves. In fact his major problem with this single text system is that it does not cater for the actual children being taught, but rather aims for a “*mediocre middle ground*” suitable for the majority. Although Michael’s closeness to the Growth model, and preference for texts of social realism links him with the *Liberals*, his stalwart conviction that text selection should be in the hands of the classroom teachers themselves echoes the *Old Grammarians* who believe that

teaching is about finding the book that will create the spark. It is about inspiration, which almost by definition cannot be produced by... diktat.
(Marshall, 2000, p.75)

This point of view was reflected in Michael’s actions. Already in Term 1 Michael angered his colleagues as he felt forced to switch novels for his class, selecting *To Kill a Mockingbird* over *The Catcher in the Rye* since he had quite an able class, and even though he loves *Catcher* he believed “*it’s not challenging enough for this group.*” He argues that this was a necessary move but acknowledges that it served to alienate him somewhat from the rest of the English faculty who felt he did not value their previous programming work. Michael states that he respects everyone’s work, but he questions a system which ignores student ability levels in the selection process. He believes that assessing the ability level of the students and *pitching* a text at the right level is a crucial part of engaging students with texts. Michael acknowledges this and believes it to be central to his selection strategy.

According to him the only thing that can limit text selection is a teacher’s own experience, and therefore he urged teachers to continually look for new and interesting texts so that the students’ literary experiences will not be limited by their knowledge limitations. Being in a school where all the texts are prescribed makes things difficult: “*Why do average texts when there is so much that can be done?*”

Michael also disagreed with the program's teaching order. Not only does the program not take into consideration the possibility of varying levels of ability, but it also fails in its temporal dimension by starting with a difficult Shakespeare text, forcing teachers to enter into a class and teach a hard text blindly without knowing his/her own students' abilities and needs.

He believes there is a better way of doing things.

4.4 Michael's First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught in Previous Year (2009)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Last year I was teaching at a different school in Northern Sydney which was a pretty high performing school, particularly in English. There just happened to be a year where there was quite a long tail and a lot of kids at the school who were really reluctant learners and didn't like reading. So what I did, I took all those students out of their classes so that the other teachers could get on with doing their stuff without having these kids dragging them down. So I brought them together, and the very first thing we did was *The Outsiders*, which came out 20/30 years ago. I had taught this text previously when I was teaching in Rural NSW, in the wake of some problematic events in the town. There were a couple of gangs going around Griffith, and it culminated in a group of Aboriginal kids beating up an Italian boy who ended up dying. That event went through the whole community, and it was all everyone was talking and thinking about. Those two Aboriginal kids were students of mine from my school, so it was close to all the students. We read *The Outsiders* soon after those events and even though I had read it when I was at school, and I liked the author, it can seem dated. But when you read it in class to the kids today, it is always relevant and seems

to be written for today and today's kids. I find that they always love this text, but I feel I need to read it out to them, not because it is a hard text, but because I think that a lot of kids especially in Year 9 and especially boys love being read to. So when I did this last year the same sort of thing happened. This class of reluctant readers was on the edge of their seats the whole way through; so it is just a matter of knowing the texts that allow that to happen and that only comes through experience, successes and failures. I would always teach *The Outsiders* to boys who are struggling or reluctant learners in Stage 5, especially in Year 9.

For me establishing the value of a text that I am teaching is very important. For example with Year 10, given a choice I would teach *To Kill a Mockingbird* because every time I have taught it with Year 10 it has always worked. In Year 10 students are beginning to think about the world around them, so you want to give them something that is bigger than their own experiences to drag them out of their comfort zone and show them a much bigger world than what they are used to, particularly in literature. If you do *Mockingbird* which is removed from their everyday experience in both time and space, and talks about racism, which a lot of kids can understand, they really get into the unfairness of the situation that is being described and they are quite engaged with the text. I am not saying it is the best written text ever, but for that age group it is really good. In fact I have had kids and parents stop me in the street and tell me how much they have been effected by it. This is the case with a number of texts, including Shakespeare, which really stays with the students for a long time, and will alter their world view. For me a good text is one that can impact on the way the students see and interpret the world around them. If I think a text can do that, then it is worth doing.

Other texts that work in the same way are *Fighting Reuben Wolf*, and I don't understand why every school doesn't have that text. It talks about two boys and one of

them gets into a fight at school because someone says something about his sister, and he bashes him in the yard. A boxing talent scout just happens to be driving past and he gets these two boys whose family is struggling because the father has lost his job (it is set in the western suburbs), and they start fighting in an underground fighting ring. It is a great book for the boys, and what is interesting is that it is written in a very postmodern way, and so what he is doing with the language and with the text is amazing. He has this great story the boys love and he uses this to expose boys to a form of writing that is not out-of-control different, but different enough for the boys to notice and appreciate. They really understand what he is doing with the language and structure, and it is simple but really powerful, and that's why I think it is a fantastic text. So I guess with this selection I contradicted myself when I said I do not select for language quality or development, since I love this book for its presentation and structure. *Catcher* is another text that works in the same way.

Drama

I find that Shakespeare is something that universally works if you really break it down for the kids. In Year 10 given the choice I would always do *Henry IV Part I*, which I taught last year because it is such a great story, and I find that every kid can follow what is going on and it is very much a male kind of text that the boys can really get into. *The Merchant of Venice* is a good text for Year 9, and *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* are also good for Year 10.

Poetry

In Stage 5 a poet I probably do the most (including last year) is Robert Frost, and that is because he has different layers, and the first is quite easy so the students think they understand it and can engage with it initially at a superficial level. He has in his poems this first level of storytelling, and the deeper meaning lying beneath. I use Frost to show the ability a poem has for multiple meanings and to show how it is these different layers and

levels of meanings that make the poem great and enjoyable, and re-readable. I use *The Road not Taken* and *Tree at My Window*, and the kids really get into that. They are poems where the poetic techniques are really obvious so we can get past that quickly and easily and move onto things they haven't done in Stage 4. I try and show the students that poetry is not just a form of language that is deliberately difficult, but that it is an alternative form of language that takes skill to write, and patience to understand, and that can actually have a lot of meaning and can help them think about the world. So again it is all about relating the text back to their world so they can access it, and through it perhaps access their world and see it in a different light.

Non-Fiction

For non-fiction I like to use films and mockumentaries like *Bowling for Columbine*, because they present information in a really interesting and entertaining way. These texts start off, and you are initially amused by them, and then it gets pretty moving by the end, and you can't believe some of it. If kids can watch a text like this, especially in Year 10 when they are starting to think about the world, then they can really get into that. I've had kids telling me that that is the best part of the Year 10 course. On a side note, I was asking some of the students if they enjoy documentaries, and many love to watch nature documentaries, which I find really boring, but that can have some use in the classroom. An example can be *Man Vs Wild*, which the kids just love, but I won't show it because they have all already seen it, but using something similar is a good idea as well, like travel documentaries. Documentaries are good I think and it is something I would like to explore in more detail in the future, as it is something I feel we don't do enough. Usually when we do non-fiction we look at documentaries as well as biographies and autobiographies. The biography part is sometimes hard to find in the book-room, because other than *Soldier Boy*, and *Anne Frank*,

most schools don't have anything else and I don't enjoy doing either of those two so it gets a bit tricky.

In the past for non-fiction I have also made use of written articles from some magazines like *Good Weekend* or *Time*, and I find the students find these much more interesting and engaging than some of the longer non-fiction print texts. The language in these articles is not easy and is not aimed at teenage boys, so it helps them to be exposed to more sophisticated language and to international events.

In non-fiction I would like to do more Aboriginal texts, but it is not easy as they are hard to find. What I mean is that the ones available are usually not appropriate for this age group, since they are too easy, too boring or too tokenistic. If I knew some Aboriginal writers I would encourage them to write more for that age group. There is this writer who lives on the Northern Beaches called Melissa Lukashenko and I've read some of her work, and it is great, but there is way too much strong language, which cannot be used in school. It is a pity, because what she talks about is completely for that age group, but the language makes it inaccessible as a school text. James Maloney has written a series of books, which are good but a little too boring. So as I said it is hard to find good and usable Aboriginal texts for this age group that are going to be engaging.

A film text connected to Aboriginal experience I have taught in the past is *Bush Tucker Man*, and the kids used to get into it, but I never thought it was that clever or worth showing. Another one which I found good was *Our Boys* which follows the story of some boys from Canterbury High, and spends time with them at school and at home, and I think one of them was of Tongan background, while the others were Lebanese, Filipino and others I can't remember right now. The kids find that fascinating, and it is good since it shows the struggles they were having particularly with literacy, but also showed how they were having

success in other parts of life, like sport and dancing. It also followed their difficulties at home, and it was really good and always enjoyed.

A way to work around the limitations of the non-fiction genre is to show a film which is based on fact.

Film

I don't have a series of films I show every year to the kids. The only one I use often is *Rebel Without a Cause*, which I did this year and last year. The only reason I teach this more often is because I am sure that none of my students will ever have seen it. I have also taught with quite a bit of success *American History X*, which the kids always get fired up about, but often has problems with censorship. Last year I also used *Boys in the Hood* which is engaging and has strong language in the context it is in. It is good, and there is a lot of moralising that the kids can understand about being a good person and that sort of stuff.

Every Day Texts

With everyday texts I go through magazines, and find some articles that are good, for example from *Rolling Stone* or other magazines. When we look at visual literacy we do quite a bit using these types of texts. We probably usually do a Persuasive Language unit in conjunction with something else but it is usually up to the teacher to come up with these things.

4.4.1 Discussion

What comes through in Michael's first narrative is his dedication to finding the most engaging text for his particular class. He is never vague on this particular point and he seems to have very well defined ideas on how text selection should occur. He believes that proper

selection is only achieved through experience. His description of the teaching of *The Outsiders* highlights this aspect of his selection strategies:

This class of reluctant readers was on the edge of their seats the whole way through, so it is just a matter of knowing the texts that allow that to happen and that only comes through experience, successes and failures.

The important role teacher experience with a text plays, is clearly visible in Michael's first narrative, particularly with novels: *The Outsiders* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. These two texts are valuable since they cater for the specific engagement needs of his students. According to Michael in Stage 5:

Students are beginning to think about the world around them, so you want to give them something that is bigger than their own experiences to drag them out of their comfort zone and show them a much bigger world than what they are used to, particularly in literature. If you do *Mockingbird* which is removed from their everyday experience in both time and space, and talks about racism, which a lot of kids can understand, they really get into the unfairness of the situation that is being described, and they are quite engaged with the text.

For Michael a good text impacts on the way the students interpret the world around them. Such texts in his own words are "*worth doing*".

Why is it important for texts to have a real impact on the students' lived experiences outside the classroom? Michael once again places himself in the *Liberal* camp (Marshall, 2000) in his devotion to student *Growth*, and in his placing *meaning* and *themes* in literature over *structure*, *technique* and *language*. This is clearly seen in his approach to Poetry. He often makes use of Robert Frost since his poems display multiple layers of meaning, but more importantly, they are poems "*where the poetic techniques are really obvious so we can get past that quickly and easily*" and start focusing on the different "*layers and levels of*

meaning which make the poem great, and enjoyable, and re-readable". For him language is far less important than *"relating the text back to their world so they can access it"*.

The last factor which comes to the forefront in Michael's first narrative is *gender*. Michael repeatedly makes reference to it when discussing his textual choices. *Fighting Reuben Wolf* is *"a great book for boys"*; *Henry IV Part I* is *"very much a male kind of text that the boys can really get into"*; and his past choices of film texts – *American History X* and *Boys in the Hood* – are clearly aimed at fulfilling the engagement needs of his male students.

4.5 David's First Interview Part 1

4.5.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement with a Text

Like Michael, David also believes that a text's success in class is closely linked to the level of student engagement. His job, is

to select texts that I know the students are going to be interested in, and not texts that I think are going to be good for them, or that are part of a canon selected by someone else who knows best. What works in the classroom with the students are texts that they are going to find interesting, that they can engage with. This is paramount to my teaching and to my text selection process.

David places student engagement with a text above his own personal preferences, or literary judgements. In fact he rejects teaching *Literature* as defined by the Leavisite tradition, simply because historically it has been valued, thus moving away from a Cultural Heritage model, and the *Old Grammarians* themselves (as examined in Chapter 2.2). This echoes the *Liberals'* preoccupation that pre-twentieth century texts only tend to "switch off many pupils" (Marshall, 2000, p.92). In his view presenting students with texts that don't interest them creates an atmosphere where *"the level of disengagement becomes palpable in the*

class, and I would only have myself to blame.” When does this happen? When a text is *“not set in their world and is not relevant to them, or isn’t in a cultural context they can understand, appreciate or value.”* And what do they appreciate? Texts that are

able to show real world relevance and value. I need to be able to tell my students that by reading this text, they are going to gain something valuable that is relevant to their real world. They need to be able to make that real-world connection with the text. This connection explicitly shows them how a text can allow them to reflect about specific things about life, it allows them to look at real aspects of human nature, and all these sort of things.

Once again, like Michael, David’s focus on “real world relevance and value” aligns him with the *Liberals* (Marshall, 2000). The need for an explicit connection with the real-life experiences of his students is what allows them to grow. In fact for David the explicit connection between a text and the student’s life, be it actual, metaphorical, or metaphysical is essential. This connection allows the students to engage with a text at a higher level, and permits them to reflect on life and on the human experience. The view adopted by David is a very Growth-inspired view. It reflects the central tenets of the Growth model in its reference to the need for continuity between the student’s life experience and the language experiences in a classroom. David’s selections also reflect this adoption of the Growth Paradigm, particularly in his focus on the pastoral aspects of teaching.

His tendency towards the *Liberal* camp is quite obvious when one examines his selections at a practical level. David believes boys engage more successfully with texts which are based on the ‘real’ world, and therefore finds it useful to make use of non-fiction texts across a variety of text types in his selection. This is not to say that fiction cannot be based in the ‘real’, but simply that the connection to the ‘real’ is more readily approachable for David and his students through non-fiction texts. There is however *“no magical formula.”* No text will interest every student; engagement is context specific and a text must interest

the particular kids I'm teaching, and that is a judgement I have to make. I base it on my own experience, and on what I know of the students themselves. It is part of my professional ability; it's my job and it isn't always easy.

But what general rule does David follow? *"What works is usually something that responds to a need the students have."* This concept of "need" as emphasised by David relates to Reeves' (2001) description of successful texts as responding to adolescents' "purposes" (p.2). Discerning this *need* or *purpose* the students have is a fundamental factor guiding David's selection process, and as he puts it, *"finding out what that need is, that is the tricky part."*

4.5.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School B

In contrast with School A, the practical process of text selection in School B is very collaborative. The teachers come together at the end of a school year and assess their programs for each year group. Each program is divided into particular Units, and under those Unit headings they select a range of texts covering the particular text types they want to teach in conjunction with that specific Unit. In each Unit there is a large *"selection of texts within each category that (they) are free to teach."* This collaborative process results in the teachers participating in the creation of a varied list of texts that the teachers can choose from, catering not only for student ability levels, but also for teacher interest levels and preferences as well. This system *"gives us a good range to select texts for different ability levels, and also gives each teacher more freedom."* This structuring of work within units is very *Liberal* in nature, since this group often organises schemes of work around "themes in literature" (Marshall, 2000, p.91) aimed at exploring real aspects of life rather than literary ideas.

In School B,

not all the classes look at the same texts. Each teacher makes their own choice (always based on the options described in the program)...We select what we want from within the program.

Thus once again the *Old Grammarian* (Marshall, 2000) belief in the classroom teacher's independence in selecting texts is highlighted.

Like Michael, David does feel that there are some particular text types which allow for more teacher independence with regards to selection, and makes reference to Shakespeare as an example of one type of text which is perhaps more prescriptive than others, as every teacher in Year 10 teaches *Macbeth* to their class. Nevertheless David considers himself extremely lucky to be in a school where the selection of texts is *"not just passed down to us from above."* This allows him to feel professionally active in the selection of texts for his own classroom, as he says that aside from the practical problems of availability (solved in the usual *first-in-first-served* manner) he is quite free in this aspect of his teaching.

Interestingly, David informs us that there is a new head teacher in the faculty, who in his own words *"seems keen on narrowing down the choices available."* What is interesting is that within the faculty he is not meeting with strong resistance, as the

faculty as a whole understands the need to be not necessarily prescriptive, but to present a coherent front across the board with regards to the selection process.

David sees this necessity for coherence as particularly important with regards to the assessment process the students have to go through.

4.6 David's First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught Previous Year (2009)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

In Stage 5 with regards to novels I look for that real world relevance and something that isn't too foreign as far as the social and cultural setting goes. What I mean is that the students are happy to do that if you provide all the relevant background, but find it easier if the context is familiar to them. For example *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is something that can be done with them, but needs to be presented initially by looking at quite a bit of background info about the horrors of the French Revolution. But to sustain that interest in a fiction text that is set so far away from their own experience and looks at things that don't interest them is quite difficult. I look for things that are relevant to them, that are going to be of some sort of intrinsic value to them. I select a text that I can justify to the class with regards to how it is relevant to them and therefore can be a valuable experience. Unless I can do that I'm behind the eight ball the whole way.

Last year in Year 9 I taught *I Am the Cheese* since it is a novel that deals with boys of a similar age as the students I was teaching. Cormier has an interesting and quirky way of writing, and this particular story unfolds as it goes along. It is fast moving and is not particularly long, only about 160 pages which is a great length for my students and may actually be shorter than that. It was a mixed ability class and I didn't really need to push them to read it as they all got pretty involved right from the beginning. I had never taught this novel before, but I am teaching it again this year because it was so successful. I had taught other Cormier novels before like *We All Fall Down* for the HSC and I liked the way he writes so I gave it a go with the junior boys and I was pleased with the results.

In Year 10 we did *Tomorrow When the War Began* and the kids liked it and it was an exciting and manageable text. It is not a text that is really based in their world or lived experience, but one they were more than willing to interact with and read. I had never taught this text before and I found it quite successful. I would teach it again.

Drama

For Year 9 I have quite a range of drama texts to choose from, for example *48 Shades of Brown*, *The Winslow Boy*, *The Mystery of Roger Melaney* and *Boy Overboard*. With a Year 9 class in the past I actually did *The Removalists* by David Williamson, since they are quite a sophisticated group of boys and they responded well with that. It's a pretty confronting text and also challenging and I think that's actually why they enjoyed it so much. The students don't want texts that are necessarily couched in warm and fuzzies, or that are filled with euphemisms that don't really say what needs to be said simply to avoid causing offence. The students want things – particularly in drama since they understand that it is all about performance – that have a strong sense of intensity which they also enjoy performing. In the past I've found that when we work with non-Shakespeare drama texts with the boys, they are always scripts that are quite touchy feely and airy fairy types of texts and the kids they just don't dig it. They want things with a bit of a punch.

In Year 9 we looked at *Boy Overboard*, which was a text that we chose as part of a drama unit we studied. It is a good little play and was valuable since it is relevant to the boys as it shows what people think about foreigners coming from abroad and their experience of feeling as outsiders. I hadn't taught this text before either, but it worked out quite well. I am not teaching it this year as I don't think this particular group would engage with it. But with a similar ability group I would give it another go.

In Year 10 we read *A Merchant of Venice* as our Shakespeare and I found that they all respond fairly well to it. The other options we had were *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*, but

since I knew that from the following year *Macbeth* was going to be a fixed text for Year 10 I wanted to look at another Shakespeare play before the option was taken away. So I am not doing it this year, but all in all I found it enjoyable to work through it in class and it was successful in achieving the aims I had set out for myself when we started reading it. We read it in class (which takes a few weeks), and once we get a bit of momentum going and the boys start getting their head around the language they really start to enjoy it. We begin with some background on Shakespeare and his times; we look at the major themes and try to extract the inherent message in the text. They like the gruesome nature of Shylock's request for the pound of flesh, and the whole play allows us to look at the themes from a lot of different angles. We didn't really act out or role play any scenes this time round as I keep that for my drama classes.

Poetry

Well poetry is actually one of my areas of passion and that's hopefully something that is reflected in the way I teach it. I want to transmit this passion to my students. In fact I find poetry to be one of the easier mandated text types with which to engage the students. I use a wide range of poetry. I tend to try and expose them to many different types, including Australian poetry. In Year 9 we have a Poetry unit where we use some poetry anthologies which we have in our book-room. In Year 10 we have done poems like *Dulce et Decorum Est* and the boys respond really well to poems like that by Wilfred Owen. They are based in the real world and look at the horrors of war. By the time they reach Year 10 they have already done Banjo Patterson and all that well known Australian poetry and they are not very interested in it anymore. So by presenting them with something a bit more obscure (at least to them) like Coleridge for example and reeling them in with stories about his use of opium you can really get them involved. For Coleridge we looked at *Kubla Kahn*, and *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, and if I present it well to them I've found they get involved and really

enjoy it. They are aware these are hard texts, and working through them and successfully understanding some aspects of the poem give them a true sense of accomplishment.

What I'm trying to say is that even though I'm not often teaching kids that are – by any stretch of the imagination – gifted and talented, by giving them challenging texts that do not dumb things down or simplify things too much, that have a narrative to them, that are great, vivid, well known texts I can successfully interest even the students with lower ability levels. Some of these poems we usually look at during the senior years of English, but I find that sophisticated texts demand sophisticated responses from the students. And they just work. The students don't want to read some of the rubbish we find in these junior anthologies. Let me read you one: "I saw a fish pond all on fire, I saw a house bow to a squire, I saw a person twelve feet high, I saw a cottage in the sky..." We do too much of this sort of stuff with the younger kids, too many Limericks, which are fine to begin with, but we need to develop beyond this: "My bus conductor tells me he only has one kidney..." Now really, the students read this, they don't dig it and it creates a sense of disgust towards poetry in general that is hard for teachers to get past. They want poetry to challenge them, to extend them and you can't do that with this childish poetry, that I have unfortunately found in my experience to be always present in programs in this Stage.

In Year 9 we do a range of poetry that is collected by the faculty and by me individually and they are poems I think the students would enjoy. I'm not knocking this anthology *Enjoying Poetry*, I mean it has its merits for the younger years, but I've found that sometimes the poetry taught at this level is facile and silly and more importantly it is meaningless to the students. If we can give them something that challenges them, that there's a narrative to, that they can sink their teeth in to then it's worth doing. Also poetry is the one text that unless you study it at university you don't ever really encounter again in your life, so it is a wasted opportunity to present them with this childish poems all the way

through Stage 4 and Stage 5. My students can pick up pretty quickly when they've been given rubbish so I try and give them something of a higher level.

In Year 10 we do a selection of poems by Bruce Dawe and we've been doing this for the last couple of years. We base the unit on the concept of consumerism and we use several of his poems to look at this. It is solely a poetry unit so it is not connected with other major texts. The poems we look at include *Americanized* and *The Not So Good Earth* to name a few. It's not a bad unit, it goes all right, but we are having a look at that particular unit for the future and see if we can substitute it with something else that may fit or work better. But it does work nonetheless, mainly because it actually isn't that easily accessible, so the students have to stop and think about it and work out what the poet is trying to express. But to some extent I think that the themes have become a little dated and so I'm a bit ambivalent about it. On one side it works but the unit could be better, and that's why we are looking at modifying this unit.

Non-Fiction

In Year 10 we looked at a documentary called *The Fibros and the Silvertales* in relation with the film unit we do on *The Final Winter*. It looks at the 1979 footy season during which the western suburbs had a rivalry with Manly. Since it deals with the local area it gives the kids a familiar framework to think about things like socio-economic differences, the role of sport in society, and write their own narratives starting from it.

In Year 9 our non-fiction requirements are met by the advertising and media unit we do.

Film

In Year 9 I had two options for films, they were *The Final Winter* or *Pleasantville*, and I chose *The Final Winter*. It is a film about change, about alienation and it's about the last

generation of the old football players in the 1980s who had to clean their game up. It follows the story of someone who was playing for the Newtown Jets (but it is a work of fiction) who has to come to terms with the fact that the Biff is out, and they are cleaning the game up, and the game is being corporatised. He finds it hard to deal with that and it has wider implications in his life not only as an individual, but in relation with his family and friends. The boys like it, it is a footy film, but it also reveals the sensitivities of the toughest of men.

In Year 10 we did *Mississippi Burning* and we look at it as an area of study also to prepare them for the area of study units they will experience during their Preliminary year and the HSC. The area of study is Discrimination and it is crucial with a text like that to prepare the background knowledge really well, or the students will feel disconnected to it. The film is set in 1964 in America and we look at the theme of discrimination and all it entails, but it is also a very good film to study because of its great use of filmic techniques. So we look at that aspect of the movie as well, including the music, the symbolisms, the diegetic, the non-diegetic sounds and so on. We focus particularly on the symbolism of the opening credits because it has very strong symbolism. There is a little African-American boy who is drinking from a broken down bubbler in the street, and next to it there is a perfect stainless steel bubbler and a big white boy with a crew cut drinks from that. It is a good film to study and the boys seem to enjoy watching and studying it.

Also for Year 9 I wanted to teach the students to write proper structured essays. So I used the film *Puberty Blues*, within the Survival area of study. Instead of using the text *Touching the Void* (which some students may have actually enjoyed but is full of technical language and quite long) I used this movie, since we had already done a novel this year. It looks at surviving as a teenager, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, relationships, school, teenage pregnancies, and in general things that were relevant and had that real world value for the boys. I found it to be very successful with this class simply because it was based to a

great extent on their reality and things that matter to them and on things that they understood. I was able to say to them “this is worth you thinking about because this is where you are now”. It deals with issues that are potentially going to be a part of their lives if they aren’t already. So they responded well because of this.

In this unit we looked at film study and we did filmic techniques. We analysed the film as text, we looked at the role music played at particular times and the type of language used in the text, especially the use of colloquialism and slang and how this impacts on their acceptance in the peer group. There is a character that dies of a heroin overdose and we looked at the sad ballad that plays in that scene and how it not only reflects but creates the mood of the moment. We looked at a couple of ideas just to introduce them to the basic concepts of filmic techniques. They responded fairly well, and we have actually just marked their essays on the unit. It is a mixed ability class and though the essay weren’t marked by me but by the Head Teacher, the results were really good. I was really happy with their work and I believe that part of that outcome was not so much about my teaching in itself, but about the actual text I had selected.

The film was produced in 1981 so it is actually a 30 year-old text, so it’s not really a contemporary text and yet the students readily identified with the content and the ideas there, and not only that, but it was valuable also for the techniques it displayed. The students were able to learn not only concepts and ideas useful for their lives, but also practical film techniques and the tools for identifying them. I think it was a very valuable text and the students were engaged.

Every Day Texts

In Year 9 we use and look at a variety of every day texts in our media and persuasive language unit. We actually do it as part of a project with another school and it looks at

advertising and media, using YouTube, magazines, newspapers, etc...It is an 8 week unit and is where we use these types of texts.

In Year 10 there is no specific unit, but I generally use these types of texts if I see things that can add to the unit we are working on, or that relate to the text we are studying.

4.6.1 Discussion

As seen in Section 4.5, David's professed method of text selection is centred on student engagement, and his first narrative reflects this: *"I look for that real world relevance"* since students generally find it easier *"if the context is familiar to them"*. He uses *The Scarlet Pimpernel* as an example of this, since the background knowledge required for students to access the texts would mean that it becomes extremely difficult to *"sustain that interest in a fiction text that is set so far away from their experience and looks at things that don't interest them"*. David's entire selection process is aimed at finding texts that are *"relevant to them"* and that have *"some sort of intrinsic value to them"*. By *value* David is not referring to either a canonical or aesthetic value, but rather to the text possessing features that would allow him to successfully *"justify to the class with regards to how it is relevant to them, and therefore be a valuable experience"*. His choice of non-fiction – *The Fibros and the Silvertales* - is set in the local area; His choice of film – *The Final Winter* – is in his own words a *"footy movie"* and thus easily relatable; and *Puberty Blues* is again *"based to a great extent on their reality"* since it is about *"surviving as a teenager"*, and allows him to say to his students that *"this is worth thinking about because this is where you are now"*.

This focusing on the real world relevance is reflected in David's choice of texts for his Stage 5 English classrooms. For David *real world* is something that is not *"necessarily couched in warm and fuzzies"* and that is not *"filled with euphemisms that don't really say*

what needs to be said simply to avoid causing offence". David believes students want and need texts *"with a bit of punch"*. Thus David enjoys and sees value in Year 10 in *The Merchant of Venice*, with Shylock's gruesome request; he believes his students respond well to Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est* since not only is it based in the *real*, but looks at the horrors of war; and he is disgusted with the childish poetry the faculty would like him to teach his students since it often is *"facile and silly and more importantly it is meaningless to students"* who want something *"they can sink their teeth into"*.

In his search for gritty texts of social realism, David once again can be grouped with *The Liberals* (Marshall, 2000) who place the content and the message over the aesthetic form. His *Liberal* stance is also highlighted by his categorising work and identifying value in texts, according to *thematic content*. In fact throughout the first narrative David makes no reference to *language*, while underlining each text's inherent thematic value. This can be seen in his description of the Year 10 poetry unit which he presents as centred around the theme of *consumerism*. He is not a big supporter of the poetry unit, mainly because *"the themes have become a little dated"*. That is the only reason he is *"a bit ambivalent about it"*. In fact, Shakespeare is studied for its themes; *The Fibros and the Silvertales* was focussed on thinking about such things as *"socio-economic differences"* and *"the role of sport in society"*; *The Final Winter* is defined through its analysis of *"change"* and *"alienation"*; *Mississippi Burning* is used to explore filmic techniques, but always tied to the theme of *"discrimination"*; and *Puberty Blues* is a goldmine of relevant themes, including *"peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, relationships, school and teenage pregnancies"*.

The last factor influencing David's selection process which can be seen in his first narrative is his assessment of class ability and the role gender plays in student engagement. When describing texts that have been successful, David uses words such as *"good little play"* for *Boy Overboard*, *"not particularly long"* for *I Am the Cheese*, and *"manageable text"* for

Tomorrow When the War Began. Engaging texts are thus presented as accessible texts both for their themes, and for their length. This preoccupation with the students' ease of completion of the class text comes through as closely linked with David's view on the impact gender plays in student engagement.

4.7 Anna's First Interview Part 1

4.7.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement with a Text

At the time of the First Interview Anna was in her fourth year of teaching, and this plays a significant role in her examination of what texts should be selected and how. Anna declares openly that *"the most important aspect I look at when selecting a text is its ability to engage the students."* However she follows this statement with a contrasting declaration in which she reveals her foundational conceptions of selection:

I am not very happy with this state of affairs as unfortunately my experience is that if the level of engagement becomes the focus of selection, the texts that will be taught will be lower class texts in my opinion. Students today are bombarded with technology, music, visuals and constant entertainment, so finding a text that will engage them is difficult. But should I then not teach texts I think are valuable and worth reading simply because they will not engage with them? Should I accept the fact that I need to select easy, short texts for my class so that they will at least read them? These are questions I have been asking lately, but I am not sure what the answer is yet.

Anna turns the table on the students, and defines an engaging text from the students' point of view as being simply *easy* and *short*, describing these texts as *Teen Lit* and *Chick Lit*. Anna brings her own personal judgement of the literary worth and social value of a text to the selection table, and expresses a willingness to refuse the pressure of pandering to the

engagement needs of her students. The value she assigns texts is according to her – because of Syllabus and Faculty policies – based on a Personal Growth model, although she personally does see value in the Cultural Heritage paradigm, and recognises the inherent social value of some texts over others. Furthermore, she does admit that there is a role convenience plays in her system of value assignment. By convenience Anna means texts that can “*be approached on more than one level*” so that even though texts are selected to extend some students, they can also work with the lower ability students and engage them:

The text needs to be accessible to the majority of students and must extend them to a certain extent. I try and balance these two aspects, and I do feel I manage to challenge the more advanced students while catering for those with lesser abilities most of the time.

For Anna, rather than focusing on student engagement, texts selected should be worthwhile texts with some form of inherent recognised value that can contribute to the cultural formation of the student. She believes these texts are to be found in the Leavisite canon, but recognises the difficulty in teaching these texts, as

the simple fact is that we don't scaffold enough in Stage 4 to prepare them for the higher demands of a canonical text, and therefore you cannot force classic texts on reluctant readers whose only real reading experience so far has been teen-literature. We generally have mixed ability classes in Stage 4, and thus need to select texts accessible to the middle students.

Because of this, Anna sees Stage 5 English as a stepping stone to Stage 6 and thus selects text to prepare students for the higher demands of Stage 6 English. She takes this selection very seriously, using strong language to express her disillusionment with current practices:

In general I do have a fear that in this Stage we are not presenting the students with the “right” texts. I fear we may be inculcating a wrong sense

of what literature is, and I don't always like my role in this creation of a new school based literary canon.

And:

I find it frustrating that we don't always teach literature with a capital "L", nor do we teach the canon.

Anna does not think everything she does as an English teacher is worthless:

I like to think that I expose the students to some texts I consider to be valuable and worthwhile, even if it is only a short story text for example.

But she does see a problem with the general mentality behind text selection in her school:

I think a lot of students do not engage successfully with English, and so we as teachers sometimes tend to pander to their needs, and I refuse to do that as I think it is important to have some kind of professional integrity.

The above quotes underline Anna's notion that there are *right* and *wrong* texts, with some possessing a socially established value the students need to be taught to recognise. She doesn't think that simply *reading* is enough, the right texts need to be selected, and in this sense she distances herself from the research literature (Manuel and Robinson 2002; Thomson, 1987; Worthy and McKool, 1996) that encourages teachers to discover what their students enjoy reading and base their selections around these preferences.

Anna's initial description of her selection strategies and theoretical stance seems to position her in the *Old Grammarian* camp (Marshall, 2000). She recognises and caters for mixed ability classes, and firmly believes that all students should be exposed to *higher order* texts. Nevertheless, she displays a thorough awareness of the various theories impacting on her teaching, and makes a deliberate attempt to eschew certain pressures deriving from the Syllabus guidelines which she believes endeavour to box her in, particularly with regards to

the Growth Model. This awareness also identifies Anna as a member of the *Critical Dissenters*, although she herself would most probably oppose this definition.

Interestingly although Anna teaches in an all girl school she does not make reference to any gender specific factors in her initial assessment, compared to both Michael and David who refer to their students as boys, and go on to assess their gender-specific needs.

4.7.2 Practical Process of Text Selection in School C

On paper the practical process of text selection in School C is very similar to that of School B. However, seen and lived from the perspective of a beginning teacher the actual end result is initially quite different. She sums up the process quite concisely when she states:

Generally the way it works in the school is that we go through the program as a whole faculty year by year and we assess the way things went for that year. We look at what sections of the program are weaker, or if some texts we used are becoming outdated, and we make decisions based on those things about what texts we should use the next year. We check if anything new and interesting has been published and if anyone has had other experiences with texts in other schools that they would like to propose to be purchased for the new year.

Anna describes a collegial and thorough method the faculty in School C employs in programming and selecting texts to be taught. This process is quite similar to that which occurs in School B, but the difference in teaching experience between Anna and David influences the level of independence she actually has:

*As a newish teacher in the school I have managed to propose two books that have been purchased by the faculty: *Saving Francesca* and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Neither of these texts are of course revolutionary, but*

for me they were important as it shows my opinion and contribution is starting to be taken into consideration.

The above quote highlights Anna's awareness of her role in the faculty, and also shows that she is conscious of the fact that she is not as influential in this process as the more experienced teachers. She says:

The thing that limits me the most is the large difference in reading tastes in the staff, and this coupled with some members of staff's louder-than-others' voices, and the inherent faculty hierarchy results in a lot of the texts on the proposed reading list to be texts that I don't necessarily like or want to teach.

This power imbalance limits Anna in her personal selection process, even though she readily admits that the process is in fact *quite inclusive*.

Anna's professional independence is reflected mostly in her ability to select the most appropriate texts for her classes from the list provided. It is in this role that she exerts her professional judgement, perhaps more so than in the actual programming process. Although she professes that she *"is not as independent in my selections as I would like to be"* she embraces the idea that in School C they

do not all do the same texts in all the classes. Each individual teacher is allowed to select the text they are most comfortable with and which they think is most suited for their particular class.

Once again Anna identifies with the *Old Grammarians*, in her embracing the right of each teacher to select the text they believe to be most suitable for their classroom.

Interestingly like David, Anna finds that she is most limited in her selections of the Shakespeare text for her class, as they all do *The Taming of the Shrew* in Year 10. Furthermore in Year 10 in School C all the students look at the same film text. With everything else, *"everyone has quite a bit of freedom in their selection process."*

4.8 Anna's First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught Previous Year (2009)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Last year in Year 9 I taught *Saving Francesca* in Term 1. I did it because I thought it was quite accessible, and I had several students in that class who were quite challenging in their behaviour who I felt were experiencing the same kind of issues that Francesca is in the book. I felt that there was enough in the opening to have a look at that, and also that it is quite a relevant text as it was set in a similar kind of area. I enjoyed the book myself and I wanted to begin the year on something really light, since I wasn't sure if they were going to cope with what I had selected for the rest of the year.

In Term 2 I told them we were going to study something which was more of a classic text, and they actually were to be given the choice of which text to study. I gave them both *Rebecca* and *The Lord of the Flies* and gave them some wide reading time in class so they could choose which one they wanted to read. It was a disaster! I thought it was going to be a good idea to let them select which one to read as I thought it was going to help empower them as readers. *Rebecca* was rejected as it was too long, so they chose *Lord of the Flies* based on its brevity. Then they started reading it and realised: "This is a boy book!" So I realised that by doing *Saving Francesca* in Term 1 I had set them up really poorly for *Lord of the Flies*. I wish I had done it in Term 1 instead as they would have accepted it more and enjoyed *Saving Francesca* to a greater extent in Term 2 since it is so light in comparison. I chose both *Rebecca* and *Lord of the Flies* for their language use, examining how language impacts on the creation of meaning and in examining the concepts of the individual and conformity.

In Term 4 for the genre study we did *Uglies*. I didn't choose it myself, in fact I spoke to the other teacher of the advanced English class and we decided together that we would do *Uglies*. However, some girls liked it and read it in a day, and these were the brighter girls who I also got to read *Animal Farm* and *1984*, and they wrote me an essay on a George Orwell kind of study. I put them together in a small clustered group and had them work on those texts even though generally I don't really believe in doing that, mainly because unless you are a very disciplined and self-motivated learner it is rarely beneficial.

I had taught *Saving Francesca* before, but hadn't previously taught *Lord of the Flies* or *Uglies*. As a reader I can say I appreciate rather than enjoy *Lord of the Flies*, as I don't really particularly engage with it. As superficial chick-lit I like *Saving Francesca*, I could enjoy reading it on holiday on the beach. *Uglies* is a text I also find kind of engaging. I think I partly taught it because I thought we needed to engage with something that wasn't a realist novel since we always tend to do realist texts in this school. I am increasingly finding that as a teacher I seem to be choosing novels which clash with my own personal tastes as a reader, and that is because my own personal taste is very heavily classical, 19th Century American. I considered doing *Catcher in the Rye* with this class but was told it wasn't a suitable text for Year 9.

I think all three novels were successful to a certain extent, and they matched my expectations and helped me achieve the aims I set out for myself. The one that was the least successful was *Lord of the Flies*, as the kids were quite petulant about it and I think they thought that if they complained enough I would have caved and taught another book. There is a teacher in the school who does that, who changes the text they are teaching if the students don't like it, even after two weeks of teaching, and I think that is terrible, as it means you've wasted two weeks of class time. I mean, sure the students might not like it, but I'm the teacher here so they do it if I've given it to them!

Drama

Last year the only drama text we did with Year 9 was *The Taming of the Shrew*. I do sometimes add a small drama unit at the end of the school year if I have some time, but that didn't happen last year. In the faculty, some people substitute one of our novel units with a drama one, and teach *Dags* to their class, but I don't like doing that. I see more value in the novels we look at than in *Dags*.

The Taming of the Shrew is a whole year text and is chosen as we need to do Shakespeare, and we link it in with our Images of Women unit of study. There are no other options for this year group with drama. The main problem I have with this text is the assessment task, as we do a Listening task at the end of the unit. We listen to a monologue from the play, and the students write about it.

Was it successful? Well it is their first 'real' experience of Shakespeare, as what they do in Year 8 is more of an introduction, and they may do a few scenes from different plays, and is much less challenging. I think it was successful and sometimes I feel it is too easy to say that a text wasn't that successful and that the kids weren't that engaged, but for what we were trying to do with that particular text, it was fine, it helped me achieve my aims.

Poetry

As I said earlier we use a poetry booklet we all contribute to as a staff. I usually teach about five poems, and the students select one of these to write a speech on. However this is what we do now and I didn't teach this unit last year. In fact the only poems I taught last year in Year 9 were things I taught as related texts or as one off lessons towards the end of the year in Term 4.

I don't think we value poetry enough and we let the students down because of this. Although we manage to tick the Syllabus boxes I don't think that is enough.

Non-Fiction

Our unit on Images of Women is all non-fiction, but we don't really have a major non-fiction text we look at, and I didn't do it last year. There was the possibility of doing *Anne Frank*, but as I've already said, I didn't do it.

We look at articles about women, some famous speeches, maybe one from Germaine Greer, depending on the class ability.

Film

I didn't do a major film text last year with my Year 9 class.

Every Day Texts

I usually use every day texts as support or related texts. They are often similar in theme with the longer text we are studying, or sometimes they are about the longer text. We may look at reviews, or introductions by authors. If we look at a genre study like the dystopian unit we did, I may show some articles about countries with difficult political situations. We look at some Kafka short stories and analyse how the images are constructed. I like to have the students also bring in some texts in the unit on Images of Women, but that really depends on the class I have, as you need to have reliable students if you plan to base a lesson on texts they will bring in. These include advertisements, articles and other print media.

I find it hard to find good every day texts, and I mainly use newspapers and the internet to find what I use in class. We do share these among the staff and if someone has found a very useful text we all make use of it. I have been making use of podcasts from authors lately and I find they are quite engaging, and occasionally we have looked at songs. For example I did *99 Red Balloons* and other protest era songs last year.

4.8.1 Discussion

As already seen in Part 1 of the first interview, Anna's selections attempt to cater for a wide range of abilities. As an *Old Grammarian* (Marshall, 2000) herself, she does favour some form of streaming in the later middle years, although her *Critical Dissenter* half has some ideological opposition to it: "*I don't really believe in doing that*". However in school C, the higher ability classes are not excessively streamed, and as such Anna's selections reflect the wide ability range she must cater for. This is clearly seen in her presentation of the Year 9 novel *Saving Francesca*, selected as "*it was quite accessible*". Similarly to David, Anna believes that what makes a text accessible to the students is its closeness to their real lived experience: "*we always tend to do realist texts in this school*". Thus *Saving Francesca* worked since "*several students...were experiencing the same kind of issues that Francesca is in the book*" and its relevance arises from its being "*set in a similar kind of area*". *Saving Francesca's* accessibility played a significant part not only in its selection, but also in Anna's whole year teaching schedule. She selected it as the first text to be studied as she "*wanted to begin the year on something really light*" that in her own words, she would probably "*enjoy reading it on holiday on the beach*". However she soon realised that starting in this fashion set the students up "*poorly for Lord of the Flies*" since the themes examined were much harder and further removed from her students' experiences.

During the first interview Anna was in her fourth year of teaching, and her relative inexperience plays an important role in her selection. Her lack of consistent independence is perhaps the fundamental factor impacting on her selection emerging in her first narrative. Her selection of the Term 4 novel *Uglies* was done in concomitance with the other advanced English class teacher; Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a "*whole year text*" that she cannot change; and her poetry unit in Year 9 contains a selection of poems largely selected by the rest of the staff. Her dissatisfaction with this is expressed through her bewilderment

concerning the Shakespeare listening assessment task which she must rigidly follow, and which limits her own approach to the text.

What comes through in Anna's first narrative is her unwillingness to pander to her students' needs. Student engagement appears to be approached with caution, and is seen to be required almost despite the students' own tastes and preferences: *"sure the students might not like it, but I'm the teacher here so they do it if I've given it to them"*. She believes that student engagement should not be held up as the ultimate benchmark for teaching success, since she feels it is *"too easy to say that a text wasn't that successful, and that the kids weren't that engaged"*, when in reality *"for what we were trying to do with that particular text, it was fine, it helped me achieve my aims"*.

Lastly, in the first narrative Anna presents a situation in School C where the mandated types of texts for Stage 5 are not necessarily always taught. In School C there is a serious focus on Novels, with at least 3 novels taught each year (*Saving Francesca*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Uglies*), and Shakespeare as the single drama text studied. However Anna did not teach any poetry in Year 9 the previous year other than as supportive texts and although she believes they *"manage to tick the Syllabus boxes"*, she also states that they don't *"value poetry enough"*. Furthermore, the previous year there was also a lack of a major non-fiction text, replaced by a range of minor everyday texts, as well as there not being any film studied in Year 9: *"I didn't do a major film text last year with my Year 9 class"*.

4.9 Troy's First Interview Part 1

4.9.1 Initial Impressions on Text Selection and Student Engagement with a Text

Like Anna, Troy is a beginning teacher and during the first interview he had just started his fifth year of teaching. There are many similarities between these two teachers'

initial impressions on the topic of text selection, and these may be traced back to their university studies as they graduated from the same class.

Troy declares that he doesn't want to appear an intellectual snob but he believes that *"some texts have an inherent recognised value."* This is something very important for Troy, and he is convinced that this value is not only universal, but that it is recognisable also by the students themselves. Although he doesn't make use of the term "engagement", his experience in his selective school has highlighted the fact that *"the kids seem to respond better...to something that's more complex. They like that kind of sophistication of advanced ideas."* Troy is presenting a Cultural Heritage model of selection, but he also intermingles the Personal Growth paradigm. He believes it is the Leavisite canon that can engage the students and allow for the continuity between the classroom and real life. The texts he selects are according to him inherently valuable, but he doesn't believe he is teaching them *in spite of* his students' tastes and needs, but *for* their tastes and needs. These texts are not only aesthetically pleasing and the repositories of cultural knowledge, but they are also engaging and can lead to personal growth.

Similarly to Anna, Troy selects texts which must *"conceptually...lead into Year 11 and Year 12"*, but he recognises the strong influence the school has on this aspect of his selection. He calls his school an *"ATAR factory"*, as everything they do is aimed at Stage 6 and the HSC. Because of this there is a pervasive focus on the classics, which he nevertheless agrees with, and points out that at least in his specific school context it seems to work.

Troy's paradigmatic model achieves the most clarity when he justifies the classically oriented text selection in his school, since he believes that these texts allow students to open up their minds *"to universal ideas about humanity."* These canonical texts have

a conceptual merit to them, aside from the obvious artistry that goes with them, which allows students to really get something out of the text which is beyond their experience.

A text is valuable, it is good and it is a thing of beauty, and this makes it worth studying. But more than this, these attributes are the very things which allow the students to not only extend themselves but also to venture out and discover new things about the world around them and about themselves.

Troy's attitude towards the classics and his focus on aesthetic beauty, aimed at unlocking other worlds for his students places him within the *Old Grammarian* (Marshall, 2000) camp. He does not deny the importance of the message within the text, or the necessity for there to be a continuation of this message in the students' larger life, but in contrast with *The Liberals*, he believes that this is not to be found in texts of social realism, but in the Leavisite canon.

The conscious choices made in selecting a variety of literary paradigms has Troy employing the "intelligent and intellectualized eclecticism" Sawyer and McFarlane (2000, p.25) described, in his selection of texts for his classroom.

4.9.2 Practical Process of Text Selection School D

As mentioned above, Troy is a beginning teacher and this is clearly reflected in his role in the practical process of selection in School D. In School D individual teachers write up the program for whole year group units. They select the texts to be studied in that particular unit; they prepare the assessment; and present some guidelines for the teachers. This leads teachers to simply select texts "based on personal preferences." This occurs because in Troy's eyes the Head Teacher "doesn't really pay too much attention to what is being chosen."

Thus in School D all the teachers tend to officially teach the same texts for all the units. This however is not as we will see entirely true in practical terms, as again in School D, like in School A and School C, there seems to be more freedom with some types of texts. In this case these are the non-fiction and media requirements, whereas novels and Shakespeare are in theory highly prescriptive: “the students read the same novel, usually at the same time.” This seems to match Troy’s own dispositions, as the classical novels and Shakespeare tend to be regarded as more important by both the school and Troy himself.

Troy’s role in selecting texts was initially quite simple; being a junior member of staff he “just taught what was there.” Troy was in his fifth year of teaching during the first interview, and already he could begin to see a change in the amount of freedom he had with his text selection, not only because he himself was now starting to select texts for units he had been assigned, but also because he was learning to navigate more successfully within the faculty and could change texts without the Head Teacher being aware of it.

4.10 Troy’s First Interview Part 2 – The First Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught Previous Year (2009)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Last year in Year 9 we did *To Kill a Mockingbird* and in Year 10 I did *Gatsby*. *To Kill a Mockingbird* had been previously selected and it was something we went along with, but it is nonetheless something I attach value to as I think it is a pretty good book as it opens up the possibility of ideas that go beyond their lived experiences, and that’s important to me. It was taught as a concept study. We attach a loose genre to it, in this case it was the bildungsroman, the coming of age story, where we talk about the way these stories are

constructed and why they are significant in Western Culture. It works well with *Mockingbird* as it deals with these topics explicitly, but they need to bring their own text as well, and it needed to be a non-fiction text (which we used to tick the box for the syllabus non-fiction requirements). They usually came back with a biography or something like that which is fine. Look I think that this text works really well and I think that Year 9 is the right class for it even if I think we could honestly do it in Stage 4 since our kids are really quite gifted. I would teach it again.

Gatsby was challenging for some students. I picked it because I liked it, but it also suits the concept study we do in that unit which is The Individual Versus Society and it works really well for that. I think the concepts it looks at are really quite sophisticated, and perhaps in all truthfulness were beyond my experience when I myself was my students' age, but I also think in this school we get them to a higher level more quickly than they did at my sports high. In terms of it being successful, I think it was very successful. The students got this idea that there is this conflict between a person that wants to challenge the expectations of society. I chose this text myself, while the other classes were reading *Looking for Alibrandi*. In our school at present we have two very inexperienced English teachers. One isn't even English trained; she is a history teacher, which is a problem. I mean she's a nice lady, but her spoken English and her understanding of the concepts we are trying to teach is very weak. Mine was the only class who didn't do *Alibrandi*, as it was part of the pre-established program. I had to ask permission to teach *Gatsby*, and was told no by my head teacher, but I did it anyway as I knew she wouldn't find out as I was in charge of organising and marking the assessment task for the unit. I felt quite strongly, actually I feel quite strongly that *Alibrandi* at the conceptual level is far simpler than even *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which they had done the previous year, so I wanted to extend them further, not take them back. I also felt that the class was very talented and so I just thought: "I wanna do this!" Plus I hadn't taught it before and I wanted to teach it. Having said that, I had

also never taught *Looking for Alibrandi*, but I had read it, and that was enough. So to finish, *Gatsby* was successful as a text and I would do it again, but it also really depends on the class. In fact initially the majority of the class hated *Gatsby*, but when we went through it again together and I told them why it was good, they had a real moment of enlightenment and started to appreciate it. They could identify that it was well written, as I was also trying to show them some kind of artistry in writing, and I think that Fitzgerald writes really well. Then I could take them back through and show them why it is so good, and why for example its pathos is so strong. And they got it! Reflecting back on this selection I did see myself as a promoter of the canon (*Gatsby Vs Alibrandi*), and I am seeing this more and more often in my teaching, particularly as I recommend texts to students for their own wide reading, when the kids ask me “what should I read?” They do seem to have this sense of “I should be reading!” and I don’t think I put it in them, but I try and support this by suggesting books I think are worthwhile, obviously based on the student’s own ability level. Going back to *Gatsby*, my students were aware that the other classes were doing *Alibrandi* and were initially upset as they believed it to be an easier text that would’ve allowed them to achieve higher in the assessment, and cheat off their friends for the essay assignment, which happens because we all do the same text usually. But at the end the class was happy we had done it and in fact students in the other classes wanted to read it in their own time as well. A lot of the students felt like I did about *Alibrandi*. It is easy to read and after about a week you’ve had enough of it. There is really not much to say about it, I mean a girl is a girl and she likes boys. And I also think it alienates the boys in the class, which is part of the reason I refuse to teach it. In fact I get really angry about how boys are treated in the school. You get these teachers sitting around asking each other “What are we going to do about the boys?” They are very frustrating. Boys are fine; there is nothing wrong with boys. But if you sit there and don’t teach them anything they might find interesting you’ll lose them. Boys are intellectual, but *Alibrandi* isn’t! So it alienates the boys.

Drama

We do Shakespeare with all of our kids. We do an Introduction to Shakespeare in Year 7 and then they do Shakespeare all the way through since they have to do it in their HSC. Look the idea behind it is to get them used to the language, but to me the language of Shakespeare is really not that challenging. It can alienate young people, but it isn't actually that challenging. I teach it for the concepts, for them to understand that there is some kind of tension that exists within that context, and that this is the way you express it. I mean there is also something universal but isn't there? So we do *Romeo and Juliet* in Year 9, since it is something all kids have heard of, and is something that is a part of the cultural knowledge. It actually works really well since they all come to it with a lot of preconceived ideas of what it is all about, and it all gets challenged since they haven't read it before. We also compare the values of Shakespeare's time and how they are presented in the play and we compare them to Luhrmann and talk about how and why he transforms it in the way he does, so that the Shakespearean text becomes a touchstone for that. Is it worth studying? Yes, I think so. I think *Romeo and Juliet* is actually (believe it or not) an underrated play. I really think it's quite good. I mean Romeo is quite irritating as a character, and Juliet is the same, but there is something there. There is something that is said about society that is worth looking at. I mean I sound like an idiot, but it's all about the human condition, and allows the kids to think about stuff that is beyond bloody video games and get to understand themselves in the process. It's about empathy, and that's what I'm trying to teach them.

In Year 10 we do *Macbeth* which is a really good play. It's challenging. We do *Macbeth* in the same sort of way, but we do it with Polanski's version of *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*. So we actually do two full films and the play, and I think it is actually too much, way too much, but for some reason it has always been like that in the school. I'm actually supposed to be teaching that now, but I always end up rushing through

it. I don't think I give the play enough time, and I would probably get rid of the Polanski if I had a choice, even though I quite like it and prefer it over the Kurosawa. But because it fits in better with the unit it is in which is Text in Time, I would keep *Throne of Blood* even though the way it is presented can alienate kids. It has a lot of dry sections of people riding horses for long minutes, and slow moving fog. But I would keep it as there is more to be said of the differences between *Throne of Blood* and *Macbeth*, than using the Polanski film. All these are done for a full term program. We tried to introduce shorter ones, but it resulted in a lot of extra marking and so we went back to full term programs. If there is no assessment, no matter how significant the text is, the students will not engage with it.

In Year 10 we also do *The Crucible* as a connected text when we do *Gatsby*, although we didn't have to and I could've replaced it, but I did it anyway as I think it is a good play which is suitable for a talented class. *The Crucible* was good as it allowed me to talk about McCarthyism for instance and the second red scare, so it was good.

Poetry

In Year 9 the students are meant to do the non-assessed Australian poetry unit in the last 5-6 weeks of school. Honestly it is a very disconnected unit of work which exists only because we are not covering enough Australian content in our other units. Anyway I didn't teach it last year. I did other poetry with them, things I like and that I think they might enjoy.

In Year 10 we looked at Skrzynecki, and I think it worked ok. We look at it as a study of a poet. All in all we do not do enough poetry and it is in fact a problem which doesn't sit well with all our other practices. What I mean is that as I said before we are an ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) factory, we prepare the students from Year 7 to sit their HSC (Higher School Certificate). But what ends up happening with regards to poetry is that they get to their senior years and are really confronted by difficult poetry, and they haven't experienced anything like that before. Anyway in Year 10 we all did Skrzynecki as a

half module because we used to do Frontline in that period and even though I believe the kids can't really connect with Frontline anymore since the references don't make any sense to them I was only able to carve half of that unit out, since "it's not good to go about and change too many things!" So we did Skrzynecki only for 5 weeks. I think Skrzynecki worked fairly well, the migration aspect is relevant to the kids even though our students are not mainly European, but Asian and Indian. In fact they are quite strange with regards to literature from their own countries. They hate it and have snobbery towards Asian and Indian texts.

Anyway Skrzynecki worked well and introduced the kids to how to compose advanced responses to poetry, but it wasn't challenging, and there was barely any focus on poetry appreciation, only a pragmatic response writing preparation course. In fact if I wanted to look at poetry appreciation I would have chosen a different poet. I actually proposed some Romantic poetry when we were looking at the program but I would've needed to fight hard for it, and maybe my own cowardice betrayed me. The only two options available were Skrzynecki or Judith Wright. So I thought Skrzynecki was slightly better.

Non-Fiction

We probably don't teach enough non-fiction at our school. The kids have to choose one of their own for an assessment. I don't explicitly teach a non-fiction text. We do a reality TV unit which you can sort of claim as non-fiction even though it's not, you can get away with it. This is a new unit we do at the end of the year and I feel quite comfortable with. I talk to the kids about the way people are manipulated by TV shows. I show them extracts from *Australia's Next Top Model*, and it's quite interesting that initially the boys think they will hate it and the girls love it, but once you show them how it is all heavily constructed, the girls lose faith in it and the boys get fired up by it. They love having that moment of

superiority in the classroom. By the end the boys love it too. They love *Australia's Next Top Model*. I personally hate it with a passion, but it is absolutely hilarious, as all it is that they get pretty girls to walk in a straight line, then get them drunk, and have 18 girls living in a tiny house with only one bathroom and tell them to be ready at 6 am, and they start fighting. This unit is a lot of fun; it's a bit of a laugh, but at more than one level. Personally I find it a bit of a joke that this gets taught in English when there is so much else we could do.

Film

Our films are always connected with other texts, as we have traditionally done them as supportive texts to novels and Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet* by Luhrmann in Year 9 and Polanski's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* in Year 10. We do look at a film by itself in Stage 4 which is *Rabbit Proof Fence*, but not in Stage 5. In fact I believe that by not looking at films individually we are passing an obvious value judgement on the text type to our students. I am unsure if this is a problem however, as it depends, as sometimes there is a bit of bollocks attached to the concept of film as modern art or literature. Sometimes I stop and think "Why the hell am I teaching film? I'm an English teacher!" I understand that films are a way of exploring reality, and that there are good films, I get all that, but I don't understand how the moment you start talking about people, it has to be English. What's next, do we have to analyse websites? I don't understand how all that is relevant. Plus all these things take away from time we could spend on other things and undermines our other work. There should be a clear distinction made between Literature and everything else we study in English. I mean there are some films that have some merit, but we do not do these. We do easy films that support our other texts. So what's the point? Let's look at Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*. The whole point is to look at how the way you represent certain concepts like love or hate or whatever it is can be represented in a different way according to a different set of values that we hold. So the way it's done in Shakespeare is very different from how

Luhrmann does it. Even the casting of Leonardo di Caprio as Romeo establishes the inherent differences between the two productions. Romeo isn't only a sleazy 18 year old who wants to get some like he is in Shakespeare, but there is something different there. We show them that, and it works well.

In Year 10 we do the same with *Macbeth*. The film works well to show that a text is a reflection of its time, but by the same token, it gets quite repetitive. Especially for me as a teacher, I have been teaching the same stuff now for 5 years! I don't like Luhrmann, I mean the first 10 minutes is really kind of cool, but the rest is like "What the hell is going on?" And Luhrmann as a director... "Look at all my colours and strange costumes, aren't I being post-modern".

Every Day Texts

We do not look at these types of texts individually. But we certainly use these as supportive texts throughout the units we teach. In terms of teaching them however we do not teach them. We do assess them however as they sometimes have to read articles for example and answer multiple choice or longer responses, but it is never officially taught. But I will personally show kids relevant cartoons or articles that I come across that could be interesting and useful for the unit we are doing or the text we are reading. These however are sporadic and short lived educational experiences. Often they look at artefacts or conversations that appear in our texts. To be honest the kids think that activities using everyday texts are a waste of time. They prefer to talk about real things, like politics; they want to talk about what motivates jealousy; if it is a social construct, or an individual situation; is it an expectation or is it a vice? That is interesting, and we can talk about all this, and I value this more than wasting time with every day texts.

4.10.1 Discussion

Similarly to Anna, Troy's position as a relatively new teacher has a significant impact on his selection process. This often puts him at odds with his head teacher and faculty. For example, for his Year 9 class, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was "previously selected" and it was something he just "went along with". This is the same with the Shakespeare texts in both Year 9 and Year 10 and with poetry. However, when describing *To Kill a Mockingbird* although he acknowledges being restricted by faculty choices, he also recognises and appreciates the text as a "pretty good book", and something he attaches value to, as it "opens up the possibilities of ideas that go beyond their lived experiences" and he "would teach it again". Similarly, although *Romeo and Juliet* is taught to all Year 9 students, and *Macbeth* is a whole form text in Year 10, he acknowledges them as useful and worthwhile texts that present something about society and the human condition "that is worth looking at" and allows the "kids to think about stuff that is beyond bloody videogames and get to understand themselves in the process". He appreciates these texts as they are "part of the cultural knowledge" and enjoys teaching them mainly for their concepts.

Up to this point, it is quite difficult to pinpoint the theoretical standpoint Troy is adopting in his selection and appreciation of usefulness of texts. It is in his defence of *The Great Gatsby* that things seem to become clearer. *Gatsby* was a text Troy selected himself for his Year 10 class. It was neither recommended by the faculty, nor in fact officially allowed by the head teacher who forbade him to do it:

I had to ask permission to teach Gatsby, and was told no by my head teacher, but I did it anyway as I knew she wouldn't find out as I was in charge of organising and marking the assessment task for the unit.

He chose to do it because he "liked it", and because he believes that "the concepts it looks at are really quite sophisticated". The rest of the year worked through *Looking for Alibrandi*,

which he describes as being far simpler than *To Kill a Mockingbird* which the students had done the previous year, and thus he felt he needed to “*extend them further, not take them back*”. He believes there is not much to say about *Alibrandi*: “*a girl is a girl and she likes boys*”. In his view *Alibrandi* was selected not so much to cater for the students’ ability level, but that of two very inexperienced teachers in the faculty who aren’t English trained and who struggle with spoken English and with the concepts they are trying to teach. Thus he went against faculty policy and taught *Gatsby* which he describes as being “*very successful*”. His approach to *Gatsby* where he helped the students appreciate it by *telling “them why it was good”* and *showing “them why it is so good”*, with a focus on “*artistry in writing*” and in promoting what he regards as the canon, again helps us place Troy – as in Part 1 – within the *Old Grammarian* (Marshall, 2000) camp with his focus on teacher centred distribution of knowledge and aesthetic appreciation. His students were not able to access the beauty and goodness of *Gatsby* without his *telling* them and *showing* them why “*it is so good*”.

This *Old Grammarian* stance is also visible in his contrasting opinions about his faculty’s focus on film. Films are always taught in concomitance with other texts, and thus he feels that as a faculty they are “*passing an obvious value judgement on the text type*” to the students. He agrees with this as he thinks there is too much focus on film in Stage 5 in his school which limits his approach to the Shakespeare texts quite significantly. He acknowledges that films are “*a way of exploring reality*”, but believes there should be “*a clear distinction between Literature and everything else we study in English*” as all these other things take away his time and undermine his other more important work. This is the case with School D’s non-fiction unit, where he states: “*Personally I find it a bit of a joke that this gets taught in English when there is so much else we could do*”.

With regards to the other mandated types of texts, Troy believes School D succeeds in ticking off Syllabus boxes, but tends to let the students down. This is particularly the case

with Poetry. He thinks they *“do not do enough poetry”*; that the brief 5-week non-assessed Year 9 unit at the end of Term 4 is severely disconnected – in fact he refused to teach it that year; that the Year 10 unit on Skrzynecki had *“barely any focus on poetry appreciation”*, but was really *“only a pragmatic response writing preparation course”*; and that the students reach the senior years and are confronted with difficult poetry which they haven’t experienced before and struggle with it. He recognises that he could try and change this situation, but the need to *fight* for the inclusion of some Romantic poetry stopped him, since his *“own cowardice betrayed”* him.

As a teacher Troy is guided in his selection by his belief in the redeeming qualities of literature, and feels somewhat stifled by some faculty policies which limit his students’ encounters with *“real things”*, which tend to be found in canonical literature which highlights worthwhile concepts.

Chapter 5 – Second Interview

Factors Influencing and Limiting the Selection of Texts and the Second Narrative of Selection

5.1 The Interview

The second interview session in the series took place 3-4 months after the first session; typically before the end of the second term. The methodology chapter outlined how the interview schedule plays an integral role in the development of the narrative of selection, and the 3-4 month gap between this interview and the first was a deliberate choice aimed at giving the participants the opportunity to reflect on their past and present selection practices. They were given time to examine the answers provided in the first interview, and reassess some of their value based decision making in light of those first instinct laden responses.

In the first interview the teachers expounded on the reasons behind their selections for the previous year (2009). The second interview continues where the first one left off with the teachers looking at the current year being taught (2010), examining the selection of texts taught so far (Terms 1 and 2), and their plans for the second semester.

The interview begins with the teachers listing the texts they have taught so far that current year, listing novels, short story and other imaginative texts, drama, poetry, non-fiction, film, and everyday texts individually. For each text the teachers provide a *justification* of its selection; a *judgement* on its value – be it for the classroom only or in a more inherently broader sense; an *evaluation* of its usefulness in class; an *assessment* on its success in helping them achieve the planned goals and outcomes; an *appraisal* of the

operationalisation of their original pedagogic intention; and a *prediction* on a future use of this text in their classroom.

This process of *justifying, judging, evaluating, assessing, appraising* and *predicting* was aimed at helping the participants construct a clearer mental image of the cyclical process of text selection. Breaking down the process in six crucial instances of teacher practice highlights the high level of cognitive thought that goes into the text selection process. This six-pronged approach to reflecting on teacher text selection has teachers working at the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), and is a most useful tool in the development of a narrative of selection, as each of the six instances of teacher practice follow on from each other, thus contributing to the sense of chronology so crucial to the formation of the narrative.

The second part of the interview moves on from texts previously taught, and begins to look at the texts being taught in the following two terms. Till now the teachers have only spoken of texts already taught during the last six terms. Now they can examine the reasons behind the selection of future texts. The teachers are asked to state all other texts they will be teaching that year, and a list of all novels, short story and other imaginative texts, drama, poetry, non-fiction, film, and everyday texts is compiled. For each text the teachers were asked to outline their (in)experience with it and their reasoning behind its selection, focusing on their planned intentions and on their pedagogic hopes and goals. This focus on their future plans/intentions/hopes/goals was aimed at creating a benchmark against which their future *evaluations, assessments, appraisals* and *predictions* would be measured. An examination of the text selection process – because of its cyclical nature – requires these future plans/intentions/hopes/goals to be externalised for a deep scrutiny of future teacher reflections to be relevant in the construction of a narrative, as teachers *select, implement, reflect*, and *select* again based on that reflection.

The third section of the second interview moves away from specific ideas of particular texts, and allows teachers to expound on individual global factors influencing, guiding and limiting their selection process. In this final section the teachers explained if and how such things as the *syllabus*, *gender*, *school/parent censorship*, *class ability*, *available resources*, *personal taste*, *faculty policy*, *literary theories* and *personal knowledge of a text* impact on their selection. All these influencing factors have inevitably already been touched upon during both the first interview and in earlier sections of the second interview, as teachers make reference to all these factors (and more) as they justify and explain the reasons behind the selection of each text being taught. Nevertheless pausing a moment to look at these influencing factors one by one not only allowed for a deeper understanding of each factor individually, but also helped to discern if teacher selection was often tacitly guided/limited/influenced by these factors, and how these acted on their teaching practice.

The final section of the interview was designed in order to allow the teachers to look back on their texts taught (both those examined in the first interview as well as the second) and on texts yet to be taught this year and revise/comment on their selection with the above mentioned factors in mind, shifting the focus from the often theoretical/pedagogic/abstract to the often ignored practical/context driven/concrete. This was done by presenting the teachers with (among other things) the inescapable realities of the syllabus, faculty policies and parent censorship, and was aimed at helping the teachers establish a more complete picture of their selection process reconciling their personal value judgments and all their theoretical/pedagogic/abstract justifications with the practical/context driven/concrete realities of selection constraints beyond their control.

5.2 Michael's Second Interview Part 1

Following Table 4.1, Part 1 of the second Interview looks at the general factors influencing, guiding and limiting teacher selection of texts. For each interview these major factors will be examined and contrasted with Protherough's (1983) model for selection presented in Chapter 2.6.

The factors explicitly spoken about by the teachers will also be contrasted with the actual reasons behind the selection of specific texts examined in Part 2 of the analysis, which deals with the actual texts taught across the three year cycle observed.

5.2.1 General Factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection

Michael's approach to the *Syllabus* is quite straightforward. He doesn't see it impacting on his personal selections in any significant way, as long as all the mandated types of texts are covered. He similarly dismisses *Literary Theories* and the *Canon*, since the first only impacts his *teaching* of a text, rather than its *selection*, and the second gives way to pedagogical necessities and personal value judgements. Michael also believes that *Available Teaching Resources* are not that important, since he states: "*the more I teach the less prepared resources I use.*" He prefers to rely on his own *Personal Knowledge of a Text*, and his expertise in setting out class work. He criticises teachers who base their selections on *Available Resources* citing *Romeo and Juliet* as a prime example of this, where teachers love to teach it because there is a modern and accessible film version, ignoring the fact that according to him the text has "*some of the most difficult language of any Shakespearean play.*" He goes on highlighting the importance of *Personal Knowledge of a Text*, contrasting the importance of teachers selecting "*something that they care about...and that they know,*" and teaching "*what you love*" with restrictive *Faculty Policies* prescribing texts for all

teachers and all students. In fact in School A Michael feels that the *Faculty Policy* is extremely limiting, and in his opinion makes no effort to cater for the actual students being taught: *“This is a really multicultural school, and these texts don’t even acknowledge that.”*

The programs also tend to ignore one of the more crucial factors which personally influence him in his own selections, namely the appropriateness of a text for the specific *Class Ability Levels*. This one factor is at the basis of all Michael’s selections, surpassing even *Personal Taste*. Although he always aims for texts which have a *“strong transformative power...and make kids into readers”*, it always comes down to what is most challenging and appropriate for his class. He finds it difficult to understand *Faculty Policies* which tend to pitch texts at a vague middle ability group of students, so that *“the good kids aren’t getting extended, and the weaker ones are not being helped.”* He is passionate about curriculum differentiation and expresses this quite strongly when he declares war on programs which *“select a text not for a particular class, but in spite of it.”* For Michael *Class Ability* must be at the forefront of all selection, so that we don’t *“select the “best” text for everyone, but the text that will “work best” with our own class.”*

In his focus on matching texts with specific class abilities and interests Michael displays an intense approach to sections 3 and 5 of Protherough’s (1983) model for selection: *Awareness of Children’s Tastes; and Matching the Book to the Children*. In his selections Michael is repeatedly asking himself questions relating back to his students’ particular tastes, needs, abilities and weaknesses. There are three central questions from the model that seem to come to the forefront in Michael’s selection process:

- What is it about this book that is most likely to make it popular?
- Why do I propose to use this book with this particular group at this time?
- In what ways may it help them to understand themselves, their dilemmas and choices better?

(Protherough, 1983, pp167-168)

As will be seen in Part 2 of the second narrative Michael is always prepared to answer these crucial questions for each text he has selected. When catering for his particular students, nothing is left to chance. His focus on a student centred educational experience however leads him to somewhat underplay the importance of Protherough's *Literary Judgements* and *Curricular Principles* sections.

Michael acknowledges the impact *Censorship* can have on his text selection process, but also recognises the fact that it is difficult – if not impossible – to please everyone, and has of late been concerning himself less with problems of censorship, and more with creating useful professional networks in which constructive *Professional Dialogue* can help him make better and innovative text selections.

Lastly Michael – who teaches in an all male school – has mixed feelings towards the impact *Gender* has on his selection process. He recognises differences between texts that are engaging for boys and girls, and believes boys to be a “*tougher market*” for which “*you have to teach something that is really good, particularly in the storytelling for them to be engaged.*” Having said this, Michael believes that *Gender* probably doesn't impact on his text selection very heavily and although he acknowledges differences, he doesn't align himself with the traditional male stereotypes.

5.3 Michael's Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught This Year (2010)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

With Year 10 I am doing *To Kill a Mockingbird* at the moment. This is not a text that this school has been doing in Year 10 up till now, but I think it is such a great book that I think it is important that we do a book like that. I have the top Year 10 class so I was looking for a book that I feel has a little bit more in it, and having the social issue of racism in the text is always good because the kids at this age are now able to understand a bit more about that, so it is always good as a teacher to get a good Year 9 or Year 10 class, because they start to think about the world and noticing problems with it. Racism is such an accessible issue, so any text be it written or visual that has it as a theme I feel is worth exploring with this age group. Obviously I am not doing it only because of the racism. *Mockingbird* is really well written, and it involves the kids. We have been reading it now for a couple of lessons, and the kids have been great; they are happy to go home and read extra chapters on their own and they are really into it.

The other classes are doing *Catcher in the Rye*, and that is a text that I quite like as well, and I would do it with a lower ability class, or a mixed class with some reluctant learners. I think that in this Stage we have to show the kids some challenging texts, because when they get to Year 11 and they start off with *Heart of Darkness*, none of them have ever seen a text which is so sophisticated and challenging, and that is a problem for many of them. And *Heart of Darkness* in my opinion is not crazy difficult, but they have never been exposed to harder texts, so we need to start challenging them earlier I feel, or we just let them down. I'd like to do something even more challenging with Year 10, but the way things

are set up here with the program, they only do one novel in Year 10 so if I am only going to do one, I need to make sure I do something that is really good and worth doing. If I had the chance to do two novels, I would probably try and do something that is a bit more experimental in the way that it is written, or something that is a lot more challenging, like maybe a pre-20th century text. I say this because if we don't challenge them, when they get to Stage 6, the kids are shocked by the giant leap they have to do with the new texts. So then to make up for our lack of preparation for Year 11, we start them off with an easy text to ease them into it, and it's just crazy, we are doing Advanced English, and we need to dumb it down, while we could be preparing them from early on just by selecting better texts the previous year.

I think as English teachers it is our job to expose the kids to texts which are going to have a big impact on their life in the future. Part of what we are supposed to be doing is engendering a love of learning and a penchant for literature, and if we are not giving them anything that they are enjoying, then that is not going to happen, and they will not read outside the classroom unless they already do anyway. Looking at something like *Mockingbird* can fulfil these requirements. I live in Mosman at the moment, and there are a lot of famous people in the area, and when I meet some of these celebrities like Andrew Denton for example, I have asked them what their favourite book is, and the majority always reply "*To Kill a Mockingbird*", as it seems to be a book that just sticks with you all your life. So when I got to this school and I was presented with the texts they do in Year 10, I was amazed at the fact that there was a school that didn't do *Mockingbird* in Year 10. I personally don't think it is the greatest book ever, but for Year 10, if they are reasonably smart it is the best thing to do. It is hard without being impossible and in my experience gets kids who don't usually read to start reading. So its value isn't just inherent to it, but it is also worth reading for what it can help achieve in class. I have had parents telling me how much their kids liked the book, and how it got them reading.

Mockingbird is a really important piece of literature, it is worldwide, and it's big. It is a book that has helped people look at the world in a different way.

With short stories for Year 10 I would do some Henry Lawson, because I think they are really good and work well with boys at this age. They are different from everything else we are reading, and they fit in well I find with our unit on *Mockingbird*. We don't have much time because we do *Yolngu Boy* as well as *Mockingbird* in this unit so I can only fit in a couple of stories. Aside from Lawson I normally tend towards American writers with short stories, since I find that their use of language is clear and not difficult but their ideas are interesting enough to get into. All these stories need to be about coming of age so that limits me to a certain extent.

Drama

In Year 10 this year we have done *Macbeth*, and it wasn't selected by me, and I probably would not have selected it given the choice. I would have done either *Henry IV* or *Julius Caesar*, but that is because I have taught them before, and even though everyone always does *Macbeth* in Year 10, and those other two plays are more unpopular, I think they are more interesting and the kids really like them. *Julius Caesar* I think is a lot easier than *Macbeth*, but I think in some ways it works better. Would I teach *Macbeth* again? Yes I would. I don't have a problem with it at all, I just think there is better Shakespeare you can do with Year 10. It was successful as a text but I wasn't entirely satisfied, and I think mostly it was because it was imposed on me by the previous faculty regime.

I didn't change *Macbeth* because as a new head teacher I didn't want to challenge every previous decision, I felt more strongly about the novel choices than Shakespeare and so I let it go and adapted. You have to pick your battles. What I mostly disagreed about - more than the choice of text - was the chronology of teaching, in the sense that I would never do a Shakespeare text as the first thing with any class. You need to know your class

well before you venture into Shakespeare so that you can pitch it at the right level and focus on the parts you know they will enjoy more or have more difficulty with. Going in blind like I was forced to do with *Macbeth* is not something I like doing. I would start with something simpler usually.

Poetry

We look at poetry in our coming of age unit, and the kids read some poems in the non-fiction booklet I made. The students also look at poems for preparation of their School Certificate exams, but really in the current program there is not enough of a focus on poetry. I will probably do some extra poetry with my class because I think that they need it for the School Certificate, but also to prepare them for the harder poems they will study in Year 11. That is why I don't really like the program we are using, as it wastes a lot of time on other useless things like the Skin Cancer video clip and ignores more important things like poetry.

As I said last interview I will do some Robert Frost, and he is always my first choice for this year group. Failing that I will probably do a selection of poetry that I think students will respond to. That can include things like Kath Walker, and other international poetry. I look for poems that students will respond to, and at this age with boys I think they respond to poems they can understand, but that remain challenging, so that once it has been unpacked and understood they can feel like something important has been accomplished. Poems that talk about the world, and express their discomfort with important issues they are beginning to think about at this age. Also I think that poetry that works is poetry that varies in form so that I have been working with some post-modern poetry that really turns their expectations of poetry upside down. So I can get them to move beyond the traditional ideas of poetry in rhyme and stanzas that they are so used to.

Non-Fiction

In Year 10 we did a lot of things with non-fiction this year. We started with *Bowling for Columbine*, then we did an episode of *Man Vs Wild* and a small selection of travel writing I prepared in this booklet. Over the years you collect good resources, like a really good newspaper article, or a feature article, and you learn what works and what kids get excited with, and again it's a chance to come up with something new and challenging, so that is what I tried to do with this booklet. I selected *Bowling for Columbine*, it was one of the options available, and it worked even better than what I imagined and the students got really involved. I selected it because with boys I thought it was going to work, since it is all about guns, but more than anything else (and I am aware this sounds dumb) I like the emotional journey the filmmaker takes you on. It starts off really funny and entertaining, then you get really angry and then really sad, and I think that it is really good as you can use that to show how the filmmaker positions you to interpret the text. It is a really good text as it is so entertaining and intelligent. You have to do non-fiction according to the Syllabus, so why not do the most entertaining text you can find? And it's not even that new anymore, it is getting old, it was made almost 10 years ago, but I haven't seen anything more recent that works as well as it does. Even Michael Moore's other documentaries don't work as well, as they are not aimed at this age group.

The point of this unit was to help them to understand that non-fiction can be just as entertaining as fiction. When we were kids we thought that non-fiction was only nature documentaries which I find really boring, so we tried to show them that this is not the case. The research shows that traditionally boys like non-fiction anyway so all we have to do is find something that is very interesting. And it worked in class really well.

Film

For film with Year 10 in our coming of age unit we will also look at *Yolngu Boy*. This is a compulsory text because according to the Syllabus we have to do an Aboriginal text, and so we use this one. I would prefer to do shorter Aboriginal texts, in fact I do some short stories and some poetry, but since the assessment is on this film I have to do it.

I did not select this text, and with Year 10 I would look for a film that they absolutely haven't seen, and the only way I can be sure is if it is a really old film, so in the past I found that *Rebel Without a Cause* works really well with Year 10. So something old they haven't seen, or something so controversial that it really gets them involved, like *American History X* or *Boys in the Hood*. Unfortunately these texts are very difficult to insert in the curriculum as many teachers are afraid of parent censorship and don't feel comfortable teaching this. In fact I need to send a letter home before I can teach this and not all parents are OK with it. I think the only films that are worth doing are those that make the students sit up and take notice.

Yolngu Boy is about three boys on a journey and the other teachers say it works pretty well, and I think I have to really try it before I shoot it down as it might work really well for all I know. And it helps us with the Aboriginal text requirements, as I always say that it is hard to find good Aboriginal texts for this age group. They are either too simple or the language is so strong or vulgar that I can't show it to the kids. A lot of texts I can find in this genre are not suitable, so we seem to always go back to films, but sometimes the kids have already seen them so it is somewhat difficult to do. So *Yolngu Boy* might be something different and it might work. I would also use *Australia* as a film even though it was criticised by many, I find the Aboriginal story line quite well developed, but the film is too long and would take a whole week of class time to look at.

Every Day Texts

We looked at a video documentary/advertisement about skin cancer with Year 10 this year, about how you can protect yourself, and use cream and a hat; the slip, slop, slap sort of thing. I think one of the teachers here was involved in the project, and helped put it together and so it is a compulsory text for everyone in Year 10. I honestly didn't see the point to it and I would not do it again if I had the choice.

It is a short film clip and goes for about three minutes, and there's music, girls, some rap star and other things. Then there is a whole website with a bunch of activities. We spent something like five weeks on it and I think that was a huge waste of time in my opinion. I'd love to get more reading and writing into the program and I'd get rid of this unit in the blink of an eye if I could. When I spoke to the other teachers about it they said that there are a lot of reading and writing activities in this unit, and the assessment was for the students themselves to make their own example of video clip. This I think is somewhat problematic; in fact speaking to parents at parent-teacher nights, many of them expressed concern at why these types of technology activities were being taught in English. And furthermore it is like a PDHPE text so although you can look at how meaning is created and things like that, I don't see how this text is worth doing at all. I will probably fight to make this optional next year because I have no intention of doing it. At least it ticks the box for every day texts.

Also the texts that we do from the non-fiction booklet are included in this text type.

5.3.1 Discussion

Once again this year Michael has selected *To Kill a Mockingbird* as the novel for his Year 10 class, since *"it is such a great book"* and since it is *"a really important piece of literature, it is worldwide, and it's big. It is a book that has helped people look at the world in*

a different way". Already in his first selection Michael is once again acknowledging the importance of asking how the text will help his students understand themselves and the world around them better. Nevertheless, Michael also recognises that his way of presenting *Mockingbird* during the previous interview was not entirely accurate:

Obviously I am not doing it only because of the racism. Mockingbird is really well written, and it involves the kids. We have been reading it now for a couple of lessons, and the kids have been great, they are happy to go home and read extra chapters on their own and they are really into it.

He believes that text selection can never be only about matching themes and eliciting emotional responses. The literary value – as well as the socio-historical value highlighted above – needs to be taken into account. For Michael it is the combination of the text being *important, worldwide, well written* and *relevant* that makes it *great*. Therefore in his selection, Michael does make reference to Protherough's *Literary Judgements* and *Curricular Principles* sections, as further highlighted by the following quote:

I'd like to do something even more challenging with Year 10...I say this because if we don't challenge them, when they get to Stage 6, the kids are shocked by the giant leap.

Michael's selections are not limited solely by his students tastes and abilities, they are also always related to how his selection relates "to the total English Program" and how it aids "literary learning" (Protherough, 1983, p.168).

Part of what we are supposed to be doing is engendering a love of learning and a penchant for literature, and if we are not giving them anything that they are enjoying, then that is not going to happen, and they will not read outside the classroom unless they already do anyway. Looking at something like Mockingbird can fulfil these requirements. It is hard without being impossible, and in my experience gets kids who don't usually read to start reading. So its value isn't just inherent to it, but it is also worth reading for what it can help achieve in class.

The closing sentence of the above quote summarises Michael's selection criteria quite succinctly. What works is a challenging text whose inherent literary and socio-cultural value is ultimately aimed at meeting larger developmental, linguistic and curricular outcomes. This is a guiding principle in his selection of poetry:

At this age with boys, I think they respond to poems they can understand, but that remain challenging, so that once it has been unpacked and understood they can feel like something important has been accomplished.

The students themselves find that textual engagement is connected with the challenge the text provides, and from the sense of accomplishment they feel when their interaction with it leads them to experience success beyond a strictly literary scope.

Part 1 of Michael's second interview presented his views concerning the limiting influence School A's faculty policies have on his text selection quite clearly. This is also evident in Part 2, and is not something limited to a particular type of text. With regards to short stories for example Michael states: "all these stories need to be about coming of age, so that limits me to a certain extent". In Year 10 this sense of being limited is obvious also with the Shakespeare text:

Macbeth was successful as a text but I wasn't entirely satisfied, and I think mostly it was because it was imposed on me by the previous faculty regime.

However he goes on to acknowledge that his level of resistance to faculty imposed texts varies:

I felt more strongly about the novel choices than Shakespeare and so I let it go and adapted. You have to pick your battles. What I mostly disagreed about - more than the choice of text - was the chronology of teaching, in the sense that I would never do a Shakespeare text as the first thing with any class. You need to know your class well before you venture into

Shakespeare so that you can pitch it at the right level, and focus on the parts you know they will enjoy more or have more difficulty with. Going in blind like I was forced to do with Macbeth is not something I like doing. I would start with something simpler usually.

This dissatisfaction with School A's program is also visible in his forced experience with the every-day texts requirements:

We spent something like five weeks on it and I think that was a huge waste of time in my opinion. I'd love to get more reading and writing into the program and I'd get rid of this unit in the blink of an eye if I could.

What he doesn't see as a "waste of time" is the work his class did on *Bowling for Columbine*. Once again this text highlights what Michael himself doesn't always consciously recognise in his selection strategies. He selects engaging texts which allow him to achieve a range of literary, pedagogical and curricular goals:

I selected it because with boys I thought it was going to work, since it is all about guns, but more than anything else (and I am aware this sounds dumb) I like the emotional journey the filmmaker takes you on. It starts off really funny and entertaining, then you get really angry and then really sad, and I think that it is really good as you can use that to show how the filmmaker positions you to interpret the text. It is a really good text as it is so entertaining and intelligent.

In six lines Michael shocks us with the simplicity of his stereotypical view of boys and guns – which he uses to initially and superficially engage his students – and then continues to describe the personal growth experienced through the students' strong emotional response to the text, concluding – almost in passing – with a quick reference to the text's meaning and possible interpretations. His selection is based on three principles: engagement, growth and curriculum goals.

5.4 David's Second Interview Part 1

5.4.1 General Factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection

David recognises the *Syllabus* as a very important factor influencing his selection process. It does not limit him and is in fact very useful in helping him justify his selections. He is very positive about it: *"I need it, and keep it with me at school since I often go back to it."*

He briefly mentions *Gender* as playing an important role in his selection process and in the short passage the importance of his assessment of the role *Gender* plays is easy to miss. David does not see *Gender* as a factor limiting the types of texts he can successfully engage his all-boy class with, but rather it is something he is always aware of in terms of not limiting the students' experience of literature and de-feminising English by selecting texts that are *"overly masculine to the detriment of texts with female perspectives."* He is aware that this is a danger and thus selects texts accordingly. This view of *Gender* as a guiding factor differs from Michael's view of it as a limiting factor, as for David *Gender* does not reduce the quantity of *teachable* texts, but rather it amplifies and extends the breadth of available texts for David's particular class. This perspective allows for a wider and more disparate selection.

Being in a public school, for David *Availability* is always an issue but he means this with regards to the actual text itself, as much like Michael he is more than capable of organising his own resources and rarely relies on pre-prepared ones. This is very much connected with his view on *Personal Knowledge of a Text* as he believes it is an essential component: *"I can't teach it if I don't know it. You can't really fake it."* Resources are much less important than the contextualised subject knowledge a teacher can bring to the classroom.

David dismisses the impact *Literary Theories* and the *Canon* have on his selection of texts, as he doesn't really believe "*in a universal and fixed canon.*" *Personal Taste* goes much further than the *Canon* in his perception and has an important influence on the texts he selects. This is the case particularly with regards to topics and issues examined rather than with actual specific text choices. In his selection David begins by asking himself questions from Protherough's (1983) section on *The Teacher's Overall View of the Purposes of Reading Fiction*. His answer is closely connected to his personal response to the text and to his *Personal Taste*, dismissing Protherough's *Literary Judgements* section as non-influential.

Faculty Policy was described by Michael as something that "*changes with every school*" and David's portrayal of the way *Faculty Policy* guides his selection process is a great example of this. David doesn't feel limited by his *Faculty Policy* at all. He recognises how it can influence and limit him with regards to assessments and examinations but it has no profound impact on what he does in his own classroom. He believes that

"flexibility, spontaneity and creativity within an established educational framework is what really distinguishes good teaching."

These three attributes can only co-exist within a *Faculty Policy* which nurtures teacher independence and facilitates teacher choice. David's views concerning both the *Syllabus* and *Faculty Policy* highlight his preoccupation with Protherough's (1983) *Curricular Principles*. His selections are guided by the syllabus and his faculty and it is working within this framework that assures him that his texts "relate to the total English program", "fit into a developmental reading program", and "lead naturally into other activities without distortion" (p.168).

As was outlined in Part 1 of the Analysis of the First Narrative in Chapter 4.2, David's focus when selecting texts is always on student engagement. For him "*student engagement is a good measure of a text's success or failure.*" This engagement is always – in David's

opinion – closely connected with the *Class Ability* level which plays a “*huge role*” in his selection process. This must be the first thing to consider when selecting a text. He recognises the inherent difficulty in selecting a text that will work well and engage the whole class, since it is usually composed of various elements of differing ability levels. Because of this broad range of ability it is important that texts “*be pitched at the right level.*” For David it is only by finding that fragile balance that real engagement with Subject English can occur.

It is in his emphasis on student engagement that David embraces sections 3 and 5 of Protherough’s model: he is aware of *if* and *how* the text he selects is going to be *popular*, *enjoyable* and *related* to his students’ needs and interests; he has taken into consideration the role of both *Gender* and *Ability* of his students; he is prepared to organise educational and literary encounters that will speak to his students’ “basic hopes and fears” (p.168); and he is well organised to *defuse* any aspects of the text which may need particular “careful handling”.

5.5 David’s Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught So Far This Year (2010)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Again in Year 9 this year we did *I Am the Cheese* which is the Cormier novel which I found the boys related to because it is about a young kid and is actually quite quirky and well written. It is also a fast moving text and creates quite a bit of suspense, and the boys were engaged by it and I think a lot of that engagement comes from the fact that it wasn’t a slower form of narrative. I selected this text from a pool that we looked at as a faculty, and although I was somewhat limited by the texts that were left in the book-room I thought it

was a good text for this particular class and since it had worked so well the year before I thought it would be good to give it another go. We taught it as part of a Survival area of study. The other novels I could've selected were *Touching the Void* which I would do for an advanced class; *Hatchet*; *The Scarlett Pimpernel* which I would never do with the type of class I have this year; and *The Most Dangerous Game*.

I like *I Am the Cheese* personally as a text, and I don't think I would like to teach something I don't actually find appealing, since if I don't like it, how can I expect the kids to. I need to be engaged and enthusiastic about a text to teach it successfully and with any conviction. In saying that I am exaggerating a little bit, but if I value a text it does help me teach it better. This Cormier novel does have a sense of broader appeal and I can justify the reason we are doing it easily to the class, as it has real world value and relevance to their lives and is not something completely disconnected to them. It is a book about the experiences of a boy about their age and I think they engage with that since it looks at a number of relevant themes. One of these themes for example is resilience and it is an important theme to look at both specifically for this age group, but also in a broader sense. We did this together with the film *Puberty Blues*.

In Year 10 we moved away from last year's text and we did *To Kill a Mockingbird* and it was under a unit we did on Justice and Discrimination. Other texts that could've been taught were *The Power of One*, *The Chocolate War*, and *Mrs Miller's Feeling for Snow* that I would only do with a really advanced class. *To Kill a Mocking Bird* is a text with a fantastic narrative that the students can relate to, they access the characters readily and there are many themes that apply to the broad world and have relevance and meaning. It is very well written, is a good story and in my experience every time I've done this text the students have always responded really well to it. So based on past experience I knew they would enjoy the story. Even though it is set out of their time, and not in a contemporary context,

once we get over the issues with the context, the students tend to readily associate with it, and it is one of those texts that just sticks with them growing up. This text is always successful and I would teach it again and I think it would work with most ability levels. I taught it with the movie *Mississippi Burning* and a *Four Corners* documentary.

In Stage 5 we don't really have a short story unit but in general I use short stories to supplement longer texts and to develop reading comprehension and writing abilities. Another thing I use short stories for is for listening activities. Some years ago I realised that kids love being read to and that I didn't do it enough, so I started reading short stories to them from some collections I or the school has. They don't have to be great famous stories, I usually pick things with really vivid language so that the students can see how good writing can paint images with words, and so I sometimes get them to do graphic representations of the scenes we've read. I try and get them to understand that in creative writing it's all about evoking images in the reader's mind. In Year 9 I use short stories for the kids that need extra support, and again they can be about all sorts of things, ranging from legends to ghost stories. The important thing is getting the kids to read and understand the features of creative writing, especially since we assess them on it. So a main thing we do is develop creative writing, and since short stories take less time they allow us to look at a variety of genres and the techniques associated with each one.

Drama

In Year 9 my class looked at *The Removalists*. I like it because it is a good, gritty and hard hitting text. It is an Australian text set in the 70s and looks at a lot of different issues, has a good sense of humour and the boys just enjoy it on a lot of different levels. There is a whole lot we can do with that text. We can look at sexism, violence in Australian society and it is easy to connect to things that are happening all around us and ask ourselves big questions about our values and our society and the problems with it. The kids also interact

really well with the colloquialism and the slang of the play as well which they like to read out loud in class. It was actually more successful than I had predicted and yes, I would teach it again even though I am really looking forward to teaching *The Club* next year.

In Year 10 we are doing *Macbeth* this year. We don't do Shakespeare in Year 7, we do it in Year 8 and we skip Year 9. So we go back to it in Year 10 with *Macbeth* and we all did it across the form, but we had the choice of doing *The Merchant of Venice*. I thought *Macbeth* would work better and it did, as the students like the story, the superstition, the witches, and also the language. It is also a fairly bloody play and it works with boys because they can relate to the action in the play, and not just the violence, but the plot itself. It is an interesting Machiavellian experience of political intrigue, ambition and manipulation, and the kids gravitate to it because they aren't used to it. From my experience, I have found *Macbeth* to be a much better play at this stage than *The Merchant of Venice* which I taught last year.

With this unit they watch a BBC animated version of *Macbeth* from the 1970s and it is a good summation of the text, as it follows it quite closely and works really well.

Poetry

In Year 9 I did a range of poetry with my class. The other classes were doing odes and sonnets, which we are not doing next year since it's finally been canned. It was an almost unanimous decision at the last faculty meeting. I challenge anyone to come to this school with these boys and try to teach them *The Grecian Urn*. I don't want you to think that we are dumbing things down, but at this stage it is all about engaging the students with the text and those odes just don't do that. With my class I did *No More Boomerang* by Kath Walker, which is such a great poem: "No more boomerang, no more spear, now all civilised colour bar and beer..." I think that is a wonderful poem to look at and the students respond really well to it. It brings up a lot of themes, is written by an indigenous poet and gives us an

Aboriginal perspective of what happened to their culture and people and their way of living. I tie it in with a lot of contemporary ideas and notions and issues around Indigenous matters. It is usually a two lesson poem as we start by looking at some broader issues before we go into the text itself. We might read a newspaper article connected with the topic, we may do some quick brainstorming and finish with the poem on the first day, then come back and break it down, look at the language and poetic features. Another poem for this year with Year 9 I used with varying success was *Dulce et Decorum Est* by Wilfred Owen, and I know it is on the HSC list but I don't see it hurting anyone. This year they study World War 1 in history so a lot of them know about the context of the poem and it comes out as a really powerful poem connected with the work they are doing in history. It is well written and has amazing imagery, uses similes, and other language techniques the boys can access in a poem that is really advanced. Listen to the language "and watch the white eyes rise in his face, his hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin." Have you ever read a simile which is so powerful and yet inaccessible? The image is so powerful and always really beyond our reach, what would the devil's face look like when he is exhausted from the sin he has committed? Using the metaphors and similes the students may make visual representations of the imagery, and they produce some amazing work, both visual and written on this poem. Another poem that works well is *Weapon's Training* by Bruce Dawe, and *Dermat* by Colin Thiele which is such a great little poem describing the experiences of a boy at school and his incredibly sad life of alienation and confusion. It is literally peppered with language techniques, so I do it not only because the boys may be able to relate to the idea of someone who is left out or is ostracised in a school environment, but because there are so many extended metaphors and similes, alliteration, and so on, that allows them to break down all those fundamental language techniques used in poetry. So in this unit we start from these poems and I try and get students to write their own poetry as well. Obviously they do that with varying success, a

lot of them are initially reluctant to try, but once they start, some have written some good stuff.

In Year 10 we are sticking with the collection of poetry we did last year from Bruce Dawe. Again we are using these to focus on the topic of consumerism. We have a little anthology of five or six poems of his and we look at how they relate to consumerism. The other text in this unit is a related text which this year was the film *Pleasantville*. I also use quite a bit of other texts that relate to this topic, and I consider myself to be rather flexible with my teaching in this regard as I add a lot of smaller texts I find around the web, or on YouTube to supplement the texts we are studying and engage the students with these.

Non-Fiction

There is no specific non-fiction unit either for Year 9 or 10. We do advertising in Year 9 and that is non-fiction. We look at radio, print and non-print, television and so on, but there is not really a big non-fiction text that we use. So as a faculty we really aren't trying very hard I think as this one unit is used to tick the syllabus boxes with regards to non-fiction for the whole of Stage 5.

I personally also show my students a *Four Corners* documentary with the film *Mississippi Burning*, but I'm the only teacher that does that, and I don't really do it because I think we aren't doing enough non-fiction (even though we actually aren't) but because I find it helps ground the other two texts in that Justice and Discrimination unit into the students' real contexts.

Film

In Year 9 the film we did this year was *Puberty Blues* which I mentioned last time, and is still under the Survival unit of work. It is connected with *I Am the Cheese*, but the film was actually the more substantive text in the unit, or at least the one they most engaged

with. We use this unit to focus on developing essay writing skills and when I look at their essays as a faculty we were all really pleased with what they produced and I think the film part of the unit is what has the greatest impact on them in this sense. It isn't about Survival in the general sense, we are not looking at man versus wild, it is more about surviving what the students are actually going through, and their essays were very involved since they saw that it was important. Other films available were *The White Squall*, *Alive*, *The Perfect Storm*, *Touching the Void* and *The Fugitive*. So as you can see all the other films are actually focused on man versus nature, but I think that Survival shouldn't be seen as only a concept far removed from modern society. It is a topic that is present in their day to day lives and not only relevant if they were ever to crash on the side of a mountain in the Andes. I found that *Puberty Blues* always works and I would do it again. Also if we view English as having the role of the central formative subject it makes a lot of sense as we are not only studying a text but learning about life from it and forming character. Interestingly enough it is actually a text that looks at the experience of two girls, and in a boys' school that has an impact on the way it is viewed. The boys need to be given texts from that female perspective, especially in this age group. The final moral of the story which deals with the concept of being true to yourself is also important, and I usually leave them with the questions "Is it more important to survive or to remain true to yourself?" and "Have I actually survived if I am no longer me?" The students love that type of thing and they see that it's not important to follow the pack mentality but to try and remain who you are and be an individual.

In Year 10 we looked at *Mississippi Burning* again and we did it in the Justice and Discrimination unit together with *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is the only film we did this year, and we looked at it as a related text. We didn't look at it in isolation, and obviously the two texts are thematically linked, but the main focus was on the novel and not on the film, with 70% of the time spent on the novel, and the rest on *Mississippi Burning*. With regards to the film, we don't really labour over it, we look at the filmic techniques and how they impact on

meaning, we contextualise it and we use it as support for the novel. Again this wasn't the only film available, the others that I could've done were *North Country* and *Hotel Rwanda*.

The reason I thought *Mississippi Burning* the better of the three options is that I think that contextually it is better connected to the novel and that makes the link clearer for the students, as it is set in America and is really a powerful film that mirrors the text and lends itself to a good film analysis. I'm also aware that both texts are well removed from the students' everyday contexts and that there are some alternatives that are closer to them that I have used in the past for example a *Four Corners* episode which deals with the death of an aboriginal man at the hands of a young white man in Darwin. That looks at the same issues as *Mississippi Burning* but it is closer to home, and looks at the different perspectives of the dead man's family and that of the jailed youth, and the view of the aboriginal community contrasted with that of the wider community. That video is useful since it allows me to say that even though the texts we are studying speak of times that are passed, the themes and social problems they describe are still relevant today since the documentary is set in Darwin in 2009. It is a powerful documentary and I think that when the students watched that, the relevance of the texts to their lives was made even more explicit. These social problems are not just limited to southern U.S.A. fifty years ago, but they can also happen in this day and age. I showed it this year (since it was just out) and it helped me teach these texts quite a bit. A difficulty I was having with both the novel and the film in the Justice and Discrimination unit was how to make these texts relevant, and this allowed me to tie it all together. These issues are still alive and relevant and the texts we study are not just forced on them to fill up their school time and I always see their engagement levels increase when they make this link. I've said this before but I find that particularly in Year 9 and 10 the students seem to work better if I can make that link as clear as possible. Some students may engage in a text just because I say it is a text worth reading, but the majority really need to know why it is worth reading, and that value can't be only an aesthetic value,

or the value society assigns to a canonical text. The value needs to be a real value in real world terms. I could be as enthusiastic as possible, swing off the fans and dance around, but if I try and convince them to read a text based only on the beauty of its language then I would meet with a lot of resistance. I try and keep that type of motivation and discussion for the senior years where the students would appreciate it more. Of course I'm not saying to sacrifice all for the cause of relevance, but having said that, once I've established the relevance for their lives there is still the opportunity to engage in it for its beauty and composition. *Mississippi Burning* is a beautiful and convincingly constructed film. So what I'm saying is that although we do look at those aesthetic aspects of the texts, I would rarely start with that from the onset, except with poetry of course, in fact I always teach *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* for its beauty. There may not be any real world relevance, but it's such a good story, a gripping and haunting story that the kids tend to like that anyway.

Another film we looked at in Year 10 was *Pleasantville* which was done in conjunction with our poetry unit and the issue of consumerism.

With *Macbeth* the students watched a BBC animated version from the 1970s, and it works quite well as it really sticks close to the original text and is a good summary of the text once we have read it together. You can follow it with the text in hand and the kids enjoy it as it is pretty different.

Every Day Texts

Our Year 9 media unit looks at quite a number of every day texts ranging from newspapers to ads, YouTube clips, etc... They are in a collection of texts that we use specifically for this unit.

5.5.1 Discussion

David's selection strategies are always firmly grounded on the concept of student engagement. An example of this is his selection of Cormier's *I am the Cheese* which "*worked so well the year before*" that David "*thought it would be good to give it another go*". It is an engaging text because it is "*fast moving*", "*quirky and well written*", it "*has real world value and relevance to their lives*" and he can easily "*justify the reason we are doing it to the class*" since it "*is not something completely disconnected to them*". This connection is found in the thematic interests of the text which is a "*book about the experiences of a boy about their age*".

David's interest in *Matching the Book and the Children*, and being aware of *Children's Tastes* (Protherough, 1983, pp.167-168) is also clearly evident in his selection of the majority of texts he taught in 2010. His year 10 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* works since in his experience "*the students have always responded really well to it*" since they "*tend to readily associate with it, and it is one of those texts that just sticks with them growing up*". David's selection of Lee's classic is not based on its recognition as a classic text, or on his personal valuing of the text, but on its proven ability to engage the students with relevant and important topics like discrimination and social justice. Having said this, David does recognise that he rarely selects texts he does not personally enjoy since he states:

I don't think I would like to teach something I don't actually find appealing, since if I don't like it, how can I expect the kids to? I need to be engaged and enthusiastic about a text to teach it successfully and with any conviction.

For David the answer to Protherough's (1983) first question – "*Why do I want to read this book with them?*" (p.167) – is connected with the ability of a text – that he also enjoys and values – to successfully engage his students with a variety of relevant themes. This answer is central in his selection strategies as can be seen in his comments regarding his Year 9 and 10

drama texts for 2010: *The Removalists* and *Macbeth*. The first is “gritty and hard hitting”, while *Macbeth* is “bloody” and the boys “can relate to the action in the play”. But more than this, it is the possibility of exploring these texts on “a lot of different levels” which is particularly appealing to David. *Macbeth* explores humanity’s compulsion to “ambition and manipulation” while *The Removalists* allows him to do a number of things with his students:

There is a whole lot we can do with that text. We can look at sexism, violence in Australian society and it is easy to connect to things that are happening all around us.

These are big issues and he presents his students with “big questions about our values and our society and the problems with it”. David’s affinity with Section 5 of Protherough’s (1983) model for selection is clear in his response to the questions about personal growth, and emotional responses to the text.

In his selection of poetry David also highlights how important he believes developing his students’ emotional response to texts is. He steps away from School B’s program affirming that “at this stage it is all about engaging the students with the text” and although it is not a question of “dumbing things down”, he doesn’t believe something like “*The Grecian Urn*” can successfully achieve high levels of engagement. Again *Literary Judgements* and *Curricular Principles* are set aside in favour of *Matching the Book and the Children*. His selection of *Dulce et Decorum Est* is aimed at establishing and maintaining a high level of emotional response to the horrors of war (which the students are studying in history), and Cath Walker’s *No More Boomerang* is similarly aimed at developing a strong emotional response that the awareness of the injustices inflicted on the Aboriginal people of Australia necessarily evokes.

The role of subject English as the curriculum’s “central formative subject” is evident in David’s justification and evaluation of his film selection *Puberty Blues*: “we are not only

studying a text, but learning about life from it and forming character". But once again this can only happen if the students are engaged with the text, and that engagement stems from a recognition of the text's relevance to the students' lives:

Some students may engage in a text just because I say it is a text worth reading, but the majority really need to know why it is worth reading, and that value can't be only an aesthetic value, or the value society assigns to a canonical text. The value needs to be a real value in real world terms. I could be as enthusiastic as possible, swing off the fans and dance around, but if I try and convince them to read a text based only on the beauty of its language then I would meet with a lot of resistance. I try and keep that type of motivation and discussion for the senior years where the students would appreciate it more. Of course I'm not saying to sacrifice all for the cause of relevance, but having said that once I've established the relevance for their lives there is still the opportunity to engage in it for its beauty and composition.

Relevance and thus engagement derive from a text's themes and relevant issues. For example *Puberty Blues*' relevance takes the form of questions regarding our identity within a peer group:

The final moral of the story which deals with the concept of being true to yourself is also important, and I usually leave them with the questions "Is it more important to survive or to remain true to yourself?" and "Have I actually survived if I am no longer me?"

The centrality of student engagement with formative and relevant themes in texts comes to the forefront as the factor most influencing David in his selections in both the first interview and in the second.

5.6 Anna's Second Interview Part 1

5.6.1 General Factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection

Anna also begins by assessing the impact the *Syllabus* has on her selection process. She does not feel that the *Syllabus* in any way limits her, but by the same token does also not feel particularly guided by it either. It does guide her inclusion of the mandated types of texts, compelling her to use more multimedia texts than she otherwise would, and admits that her heavy reliance on the *Classics* is quite probably a response to the *Syllabus*' reliance to the *Personal Growth* model. *Literary Theories* is another factor which does not really influence her selection process, although she professes to be perfectly conversant with them.

Some external factors limiting Anna's text selection process are *Availability*, since "*everyone is on a budget*," and *School and Parent Censorship*, which she has become much more aware of in these last two years. This limits her as she has become less adventurous in her "*selections, so as to avoid parental involvement*." Interestingly, Anna highlights the fact that the Catholic identity and nature of the school does not impact on her selection, as school policies do not tend to be "*that active in blocking, or censoring the texts that we teach in class*."

The external factor most limiting Anna's selection process is *Faculty Policy*, as it is "*something which you really can't get away from*." Still today her position as a junior teacher gives her little power in the dynamics of the faculty. Thinking back she remembers that in her first two years of teaching she perhaps limited herself as she did not consider herself experienced enough to contribute to the faculty discussions concerning the selection of texts. In some ways she recognises that she was right and that even though she sometimes

disagreed, she actually “*did not know better*” and that some of the ideas she had when she started teaching were in fact “*really basically flawed.*”

After gathering some years of experience Anna concluded that her wanting to always teach *higher* texts, even to lower ability students was not a pedagogically sound idea. Although her theoretical justification was democratically speaking correct – since as a *Critical Dissenter* (Marshall, 2000) she believed all students deserved to experience *worthwhile* Literature – she soon concluded that her concrete reasons for teaching these texts were more often than not

really aimed at satisfying my own need of feeling like I had accomplished something, when really, I hadn't.

As a beginning teacher, for the first two years, Anna's text selection focussed almost entirely on Protherough's (1983) first two questions:

- Why do I want to read this book with them?
- What do I hope that the reading may achieve?

As she had already expressed in the first interview, initially in her selection process student abilities, tastes and engagement needs were not prominent. In the second interview she acknowledges – as described by Cope (1997) in Chapter 2 – that she was often guided in her teaching and selection by where she wanted her students to be rather than where they actually were.

Having said this, on a personal level Anna's selections are very much based on her own *Personal Tastes*, and she rarely teaches texts she doesn't like for the simple reason that she finds it difficult to “*imagine other people liking them.*” This valuing of *Personal Taste*, sometimes makes texts selection difficult for Anna as she continually struggles to find the balance

between something I know and like and think would be valuable to teach, and texts which are both relevant and answer the requirements of the syllabus and school program.

This has led Anna to focus more and more on her *Personal Knowledge of a Text*, as she has a set number of texts she likes and is more familiar with which she likes to teach. This was not the case in her first two years of teaching, where she was “*willing to try anything.*”

As mentioned above, Anna originally believed that all students should read Literature (with a capital L), but as time progressed she began to really perceive the importance of assessing *Class Ability* when selecting texts to be taught. This is even more so in Stage 5 in School C since the classes are not streamed and are usually very mixed ability groups. *Class Ability* has the biggest impact on the length of the texts Anna can choose, as “*some students just need 100-page books.*” Her newfound focus on *Class Ability* in conjunction with *Personal Taste* displays Anna’s developing sense of *Awareness of Children’s Tastes*, and her extra willingness to *Matching the Book and the Children*. Nevertheless her personal value judgements concerning the texts she selects continue to play a prominent role in her teaching.

Gender is something Anna “*often wonders about*” but since she has only taught in an all-girl school, she does not have anything to compare it to. She admits she would not teach some texts she is currently teaching to an all-boy class, but does not have a very clear idea as to why, except for the fact that they are generally viewed as girl books. She finds this somewhat difficult as she personally never made that distinction in her reading experience when growing up.

Having stated that *Personal Taste* and *Personal Knowledge of a Text* play a significant role in Anna’s selection process, and re-examining her admission of preferring the *Classics* in response to the *Syllabus* philosophy, it is apparent that the *Canon* itself is rather

important in her text selections. She recognises that some texts are “*valuable and worthwhile in a broader human sense*” and these texts often appear in her selections. Anna believes in a subject English dominated by *Literature*.

5.7 Anna’s Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught This Year (2010)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

This year I have a top Year 9 class. The concept of “top” in this school is really a relative thing, as there are about one hundred and forty girls in the year, and the “top” consists of the best fifty. So it isn’t really the elite, just a bit better than your usual non-streamed average class. This year I have taught *Rebecca*, *Saving Francesca*, and *Animal Farm*. These were all taught individually as single texts. In the last term I will also look at *Fahrenheit 451* which will be connected with *Animal Farm* and the thematic unit we do on Dystopian texts. I teach one novel per term.

I selected all these texts myself, and each has a specific reason for being included. With *Rebecca*, I mainly chose the text as it was connected to a specific assessment task which has to do with a detailed study of the techniques employed in the opening chapters of a novel. If you look at *Rebecca* it has a very dramatic opening with a lot of foreshadowing, a lot of imagery and some really rich language. So essentially, because the task looks at the first 10 pages of a text, I really think *Rebecca* was the best text available to me for that particular type of assessment. I studied this text when I was at school and I originally found it quite a heavy novel, but I wanted to start the year with this class on a serious note, to help

me set the tone for the rest of the year; we aren't here to muck around! It is something a little more canonical than your average piece of teen literature. The other classes all did different texts from the one I chose. The other top class did *Uglies*, while other classes did *The Anatomy of Wings* which is a teen novel, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and the lower ability class did the play *Dags*.

Although I chose *Rebecca* solely for its usefulness in the classroom with regards to the scheduled assessment, I don't think its value is limited to that. I would never teach something I don't believe is valuable and worthwhile. Or in other words I don't teach texts I inherently believe are crap. *Rebecca* was a successful text in the sense that I chose it for the assessment task, and at that level, they all went very well in their assessment. However, it was the sort of successful regurgitation of what I had fed them during the unit. They wrote things that sounded sophisticated, but really I think only a couple actually went on and read the whole book and enjoyed it. So for most of them it was educationally successful, but it didn't really touch them in any way, and probably isn't a text that will remain with them as they grow up. I would teach it again in the same context and with the same type of class, as I believe it is valuable, and also because with Year 9 English has to be some kind of step up from Year 8. It is a new Stage but if we are always doing teen literature then there is no advancement at all. We need to start scaffolding towards the senior English courses early on, and I think that at least in this school we don't do that enough. I want to teach the students the difference between 'liking' and 'appreciating', as it is a very important skill to master. They will 'like' *Saving Francesca*, but I think they need to learn to appreciate and have some form of intellectual curiosity for something like *Rebecca*.

Saving Francesca was part of a unit on The Individual and Conformity, and I taught it in conjunction with a film called *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. I selected this text because I enjoy reading it and teaching it. I think it has enough depth to look at it in a more

sophisticated way in class. It has a subjective and unreliable narrator and does some interesting things with tone, and there is a whole level of different inter-cultural references within the text that can be discussed. There's no point in studying a novel if you feel there is not enough in it as a text and a complex piece of writing to allow your students to engage with it and be able to write extensively about it in an assessment. So I chose it because I can do a lot of good things in the classroom with it, and I think it is quite relevant and close to the students as a text. It deals with a mother who suffers from depression and so is also quite a sensitive issue, and looks at problems within friendship groups, and with Year 9 girls, who can be quite 'bitchy' it is all really relevant to them.

So I think that compared to my selection of *Rebecca* which was largely based on an F.R. Leavis Cultural Heritage sort of model, my choice of *Saving Francesca* was much more a combination of Critical Literacy and the whole notion that the text should relate to the person. I would teach *Saving Francesca* again, but not to the same type of class as they mostly found it too easy and maybe enjoyed it too much. I think it could've been a wide reading text and the class would have read it in 1-2 weeks in their own time, and we could have had some discussion about it in class and leave it at that. I think that the literary study of English can be separate from the simple experience of enjoying reading, but I did achieve what I wanted with this text and it was a good link to our unit on The Individual and Conformity. However in terms of my class I think I underestimated them and pitched a text that was too low for them. Looking back I could've probably done something more challenging in its themes which would allow the students to not just enjoy it, but also push them to think about it.

I taught *Animal Farm* in Term 3, and I am just about finishing it these last few days. It is a text that is connected to a genre study unit about dystopian texts where we look at a variety of examples and conclude with the students writing their own dystopian short story.

It is an interesting text and I chose it partly because of its length, to start the unit with a shorter novel that all the class will be surely able to get through, and it manages to appeal to people at different levels. In my class there is pretty much a 'cream' and whatever the opposite of 'cream' is, and I think the novel caters for both sections of the class. I think it has been a successful text, but perhaps I found the para-textual nature of the genre study more successful than the actual text itself. I'm talking about all the links that can be made which surround the actual novel itself. I think that in general with any of Orwell's novels, you don't really read them for their literary style, but for the concepts that they explore. I am not a history teacher at all, but I think that there are too many things in the HSIE Syllabus which get ignored in our schools, so I like to show some of them to my students in the English texts I select. I really focus on how the ideas expressed in *Animal Farm* have actually been implemented in various places and have impacted on real people's lives. I want to show the students the real power an 'idea' can have. I would teach this text again as I think it is really good at what it does, and with the resources and lovely cartoon available you can make it quite accessible to most types of students.

In Year 9 we do quite a number of short stories, and this year for example I taught *The Tell Tale Heart* by Poe, and *Lambs to the Slaughter* by Dahl. The focus is on creative writing, and the students write their own short story. I think NAPLAN testing has really made an impact here, as it makes us focus quite extensively on that part of the Syllabus, including grammar and vocabulary. I don't think we sold ourselves out in that sense, but all the same NAPLAN preparation does influence what we teach in class. Sometimes I pick short stories also thinking about what we are going to do after, and since this unit was going to be followed by *Rebecca*, I thought that doing the Poe story which like *Rebecca* has an unreliable narrator was a useful thing to do to familiarise the class with that type of writing. The tone is also quite bewitching. He is a mad person trying to convince you he isn't mad for the entire

piece, and so it is really interesting. The Dahl story instead I chose because it has a bit of a twist in it, and so it is quite engaging, and the kids love it.

I need to revamp my selection of short stories, and include some newer texts. I find that the more I think about it and speak about it here in the interviews, the more I realise how much I choose the classics, just because they are classics, and how frustrated I am with the fact that we don't do enough of the classics in school. Maybe it is because I personally went to a school that was very much focused on the classics and so I'd like to reproduce my educational experiences with my students as I believe them to be worthwhile.

I look at some of my students' writing, and when they tell me that they would like to do English at university, I always tell them that they haven't the faintest clue what they will encounter at that level of English. We don't prepare them for it and I think a lot of people do English their first year of university as they don't know what it will be like, as their experiences at school have given them a false impression.

As I mentioned before, I will also do the novel *Fahrenheit 451* next term, and the students select another text between *1984* and *Uglies*, to accompany it. In Term 4 there is no assessment so I wanted to pick some texts where we could do a lot of discussion in class where the kids could glimpse some larger ideas about life and the world around them, to teach them how to think and extend them. The absence of the assessment allows me not to stress about "oh my God, they won't get that bit", and just let them read it and talk about it, and whatever they get is good enough for me, it will surely benefit them, some more and some less, but they will all like it. In this sense, where I am trying to teach the students not "what to think", but rather simply "to think", it is quite hard really to assess the success of the text, and the unit I am doing. I think in this particular case, the level of engagement is perhaps a better measure of success than the work they will or won't produce. I don't expect flights of brilliance all the time, but when we look at texts with really important and

interesting concepts, I like to see some spark of interest in the students' eyes when we discuss it in class.

Drama

For Year 9 this year I did *The Taming of the Shrew* with my class and it was connected to the Images of Women unit, and it went fairly well, even though I find that the girls don't engage with it very well.

Poetry

There is no poetry unit in Year 9, so I haven't taught any official poetry in that sense, but I have looked at some song lyrics, from the protest era songs. These were connected to the Dystopian Unit and we looked at the cultural references present in the text. We read *Ninety-Nine Red Balloons*, *We Are All Bourgeois Now*, and those types of songs, mainly for the ideas they express. We looked at some of the song lyrics of songs mentioned in *Saving Francesca*, but we really haven't looked at that much poetry honestly. In our Creative Writing Unit I did a couple of poems as stimulus material, but that is more or less it.

With the protest songs our main interest was with recurring thematic motifs, so not so much doing a close analysis or anything like that. We did look at the stimulus poems quite closely, and the students seemed to enjoy the study of it, but there is no real focus on poetry in Year 9 in this school at all. The poems I looked at included *When I Am Old I Shall Wear Purple* and other 'modern' poems, but they all had to have a good character being described, as that would be the character the students would have to write about in their short story.

Non-Fiction

With non-fiction I mainly just looked at newspaper articles every once in a while when they are connected to something we are doing in class, or can be useful in extending the ideas we are looking at in one of the novels or other texts. So for example we used a lot of magazines and advertisements in our unit on Images of Women. We looked at some feminist texts, as the focus is on the way the media either oppresses women or highlights images of women which make us feel negative about ourselves. I found that these types of texts were in some cases a little too close to home for some of the girls in the class, who do suffer from some eating disorders, and who got really mad about some aspects of the unit.

Some of the other teachers have done other texts, including diaries or documentaries, as the program in this school gives the teachers a lot of freedom to select what they think is best for their own classroom. But I haven't done these this year as I preferred to focus on other aspects of English.

One sort of more major text I did for the non-fiction requirements was a short based-on-a-true-book film called *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes*, which looks at the difficult and absurd training regimes of elite girl gymnasts. It is an extreme example, but it does highlight some of the pressure society puts on girls to be thin. We also looked at some short scenes from an eating disorders documentary, but not all of it as I wasn't trying to force the point too much, and they already look at this type of thing in PDHPE.

Film

The film we looked at this year with Year 9 is one of the only all-form texts in the program, and it was *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. We do this text as part of The Individual and Conformity Unit, together with *Saving Francesca*. It is a good movie, but the repetition of it every year has made me really hate it. The problem with movies, particularly in Year 9 is

that they have to be PG rated, and so it is quite hard to find something good with that rating, which isn't just childish. That is a huge restriction, as a lot of the films I'd like to teach are M rated, or are PG but are too long or boring. This class I have would really enjoy something like *Gone With the Wind*, but it goes for three hours, and so it makes it too difficult to include it, especially since the periods in the school are only 45 minutes so you would need 5 full periods to finish it.

Every Day Texts

I make use of every day texts in the non-fiction unit, and I use newspapers, magazines, comics, political cartoons, and other things of that nature as support texts.

5.7.1 Discussion

Anna values Literature (always with a capital 'L') and believes it to be the central textual form present in her teaching. Because of this, although Anna is prepared to justify all her selections, it is in her justification and defence of her selected novels that she provides the most details. She recognises the importance of film, but she is limited by the 45-minute periods in School C, and the fact that

in Year 9 they have to be PG rated, and so it is quite hard to find something good with that rating, which isn't just childish.

Poetry is also Literature but *"there is no real focus on poetry in Year 9 in this school at all"* and her selection is limited by the character based assessment. *The Taming of the Shrew* as the single drama and Shakespeare text for Year 9 is a whole form text, and as such was not selected by Anna, who in fact found that her students didn't *"engage with it very well."* Her valuing of non-fiction also seems to question the value assigned by the syllabus itself, as she limited these to some short texts on media images of women. She chose not to do longer

non-fiction texts – such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* – as she “preferred to focus on other aspects of English”. These “other aspects” are the four novels – one per term – which Anna selected and taught her Year 9 students that year. It is these texts that Anna values the most, which allow her to more freely express her professional discretion, and which more clearly highlight her selection criteria.

In 2010 Anna taught four novels: *Rebecca*; *Saving Francesca*; *Animal Farm*; and *Fahrenheit 451*. Each “has a specific reason for being included”, and the first three in particular reflect a high level of thought closely connected with Protherough’s (1983) model presented throughout this chapter.

Rebecca’s selection is concerned with the *Curricular Principles*, in the sense that it was selected as it was – according to Anna – “connected to a specific assessment task which has to do with a detailed study of the techniques employed in the opening chapters of a novel”. *Rebecca* was valuable as “it has a very dramatic opening with a lot of foreshadowing, a lot of imagery and some really rich language”. This particular selection was aimed at successfully completing an assessment, but also attempted to cater to the needs of her particular students, by starting “the year with this class on a serious note, to help me set the tone for the rest of the year; we aren’t here to muck around!” Nevertheless, Anna felt it was important to state that

Although I chose Rebecca solely for its usefulness in the classroom with regards to the scheduled assessment, I don’t think its value is limited to that. I would never teach something I don’t believe is valuable and worthwhile. Or in other words, I don’t teach texts I inherently believe are crap.

Literary Judgements and *Curricular Principles* are intertwined in her selection strategies, since as will be seen Anna’s answer to Protherough’s first question – why do I want to read this with my students? – has a two-part answer. Anna believes it is a valuable literary text

that can teach her students *“the difference between ‘liking’ and ‘appreciating’, as it is a very important skill to master”*. But she also sees it as useful in preparing her students for Stage 6, since *“Year 9 English has to be some kind of step up from Year 8”* and Rebecca fits the requirements to do this.

Saving Francesca was selected based on the notion that *“the text should relate to the person”*. As a text it was *“quite relevant and close to the students”* – as already examined in Chapter 4 – and exhibits Anna’s attempts to cater to her students’ tastes, and *Matching the Book with the Children* (Protherough, 1983). Having said this, Anna does not select texts simply based on her students’ engagement. *Saving Francesca* *“has enough depth to look at it in a more sophisticated way in class”* and was selected since it allows her to *“do a lot of good things in the classroom with it”*. In this instance Anna recognises she did not successfully match her students’ ability with the chosen text, as she thinks *“they mostly found it too easy and maybe enjoyed it too much”*. She makes a clear distinction between *“the literary study of English”* and *“the simple experience of enjoying reading”* recognising a place and time for both, but not necessarily in her own classroom.

The third novel Anna taught her Year 9 class in 2010 was *Animal Farm*. In this particular selection Anna was guided principally by her students’ ability levels – which after two terms she was expertly familiar with:

I chose it partly because of its length, to start the unit with a shorter novel that all the class will be surely able to get through, and it manages to appeal to people at different levels.

In the second instance Anna selected the text based on the *“para-textual nature of the genre study”*. The text wasn’t selected for its *“literary style, but for the concepts”* it explores, and for its ability to be linked with other texts exploring these same concepts. Anna’s

selection was not guided by her usual concepts of Literature, but rather to *“show the students the real power an ‘idea’ can have.”*

5.8 Troy’s Second Interview Part 1

5.8.1 General Factors Influencing, Guiding and Limiting Text Selection

For Troy the *Syllabus* has some minor role in his selection process, but only in so much as he and the rest of the staff in School D use it to *“reverse engineer selections and justify them in our programming.”* In fact, Troy *“can’t ever recall pulling it out at a meeting except right at the last second when we make sure we can get away with what we have selected.”* In Stage 5 the *Syllabus* is not in his view a useful tool, but rather a *to-do* list with a series of boxes that must be ticked off. Similarly he doesn’t believe *Gender* plays such an important part in his selection process, although it can influence the actual pedagogical content of his classroom lessons.

Troy makes a distinction between factors actually influencing the selection process at both a personal and school level, and those he believes do not influence it enough. At a personal level, the *Personal Knowledge of a Text*, and *Personal Taste* play an important part in Troy’s own selection process: *“nobody wants to teach something they have never seen before.”* This is particularly the case in Stage 5, as it can be somewhat avoided more easily than for example in Stage 6, where he must often spend a lot of time catching up: *“it’s easier to do what you know.”*

With regards to *Personal Taste* Troy admits he sometimes selects text based on his personal preferences, but he does not need to. In fact he mirrors some of the thoughts expressed by the other teachers examined earlier in the chapter when he states: *“There are*

texts I like which I wouldn't necessarily teach, and texts I think are worth teaching that I don't like."

Very much connected to this idea of *Personal Taste*, is Troy's belief in the *Canon*, which he describes as *"real and important for me."* The difficulty he finds in selecting texts from the *Canon* comes from the staff, who actually see in the concept a form of intellectual snobbery. Nevertheless, Troy recognises the presence of a school based *Canon* which the teachers often select from, and he often feels that this type of *Canon* is forced on him by some older faculty members and their pre-established programs.

At the school level, Troy finds *School and Parent Censorship* unjustifiably limiting his selection process. He feels the school and particularly the English faculty tread *"unnecessarily lightly around"* some of the religious minorities in the school so as to not offend anyone and avoid major parental confrontations, or involvement. This situation stops them *"from asking to do things we suspect they would block."* So it is the teachers limiting themselves rather than *Censorship* coming down from above, *"but the end result is the same."*

Also at a whole school level *Availability* impacts quite significantly on the selection process as it does in most schools. This is particularly problematic since – following a Board of Studies Review of the English faculty – all students are required to read the same texts at the same time, so as to be assessed in the same manner:

This resulted in our resources being very limited, as there are very few texts which we have a set for an entire year group.

As a beginning teacher Troy finds his School's *Faculty Policies* quite limiting. He believes this was caused by the negative impact the external review (mentioned above) had on the staff, and particularly on the head teacher.

There is a sense of “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, and that the way they have always done things is necessarily always the best way.

Troy feels limited by the faculty hierarchy since his voice *“struggles to be heard.”*

Troy believes that in School D both *Literary Theories* and *Class Ability* do not have enough of an impact on the selection process: *“We never talk about this sort of thing in our staff meetings.”*

He attempts to introduce this type of conversation with the rest of the staff as he believes that some of the shortcomings his students have could be addressed by having a look at some of these theories, but there is not much interest shown from his colleagues. He thinks that the nation-wide push to get students reading has somewhat missed the point: *“It’s not enough just to read; what you read must also be of value!”* He believes that *Literary Theories*, and the *Canon* can help teachers select these valuable and worthwhile texts.

As mentioned above, Troy is convinced that *Class Ability* should also count for more than it does in School D. Since School D is a selective school, he believes that the staff assumes that all the students are at the same level, and thus never differentiate their texts and work. He thinks that they should stop *“aiming for the average middle ground.”* In his opinion this is in some way caused by the review process the staff had to undergo, which has frightened them into always going back to the safety-net of the review recommendations whenever something new or daring is proposed. Texts need to be selected based on the ability of the particular class being taught, and thus the *“practice of always teaching the whole year group the same texts is counterproductive.”* This is particularly the case since several key members of staff were away that particular year, and their substitutes were not particularly brilliant, and *“in certain ways, incompetent.”* Troy found it difficult to work in a situation which – because of the single text policy – often resorted to selecting texts based

mainly on the following question: *“Will teacher X be able to do that unit?”* Troy believes that this mentality severely limits his selection and programming.

Troy’s selection process makes use of all five subheadings present in Protherough’s (1983) model; he is conscious of his personal purpose in teaching a text and the fact that it is connected with his valuing of canonical texts; he closely evaluates the literary nature of the work, particularly with regards to the “quality of the writing” (p.167); his willingness to break away from the faculty’s pre-established programs highlight his awareness of both what his students enjoy and engage with, as well as his students’ ability levels and pedagogical and developmental needs; furthermore his constant struggle with faculty policy hints at his preoccupation with program continuity and development, particularly in his view of Stage 5 as a stepping stone to Stage 6.

Lastly, Troy dislikes the skills based teaching the NAPLAN tests force him to undertake, as it wastes time doing repetitive work which bores the students and takes away the opportunity to do other more constructive activities which teach the students to be *“switched on, and able to argue and discuss interesting things in class in a competent way.”*

5.9 Troy’s Second Interview Part 2 – The Second Narrative of Selection

Specific Texts Taught So Far This Year (2010)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

In Year 10 this year I taught *The Great Gatsby* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* to Year 9 together with a series of Short Stories, more in terms of showing them form, but also in terms of analysis as well. The short stories were a collection of Australian short stories. It

was an anthology we had selected and included some Tim Winton texts if you want to know an author that comes to mind.

These novels were the same as those I taught last year to the respective year groups, and so my reasons for teaching them have not really changed since last year, except for the short stories which are new. In fact it is an entirely new thing in the school. I came up with this idea that we needed to do much more in order to teach the kids to improve in terms of their writing particularly with their creative writing. In fact a lot of our kids have problems with writing short stories, and since a lot of them end up doing Extension 1 for their HSC, it is a problem because when they come to do that, if they write using simplistic structures, or one dimensional characters, or simplistic plot-lines, or whatever it is, it turns out to be complete garbage and it gets taken apart and drilled by the examiners. So we selected a lot of short stories for Year 9 and we did that more or less as a skills exercise but also in terms of analysing the way these stories are actually good. We do this to show them the value of them in terms of their engagement or the way they can access an issue or their pathos.

The novels we taught for the same reasons we taught them last year. I think they are good novels to teach kids anyway, so I don't have a problem with them. For me it comes down to the fact that we make an assumption that if we choose something good and challenging (and I'm aware that *good* is such a nebulous term) we know it will work in the classroom. The kids will get it! They may not get it at the start, but they will start to understand it and they'll start to think about it. I think this is proven. I see it in Stage 6 with T.S. Eliot, where 99% of our kids end up loving him, and they understand some pretty big concepts. They get the idea of all that modernist nihilism, and this whole sense of redemption and all of that. It's pretty good and so I select the texts primarily because I like them, particularly the novels, but I also feel there is a conceptual merit that is worth

studying. I also start from the assumption that if I like them and they are valid – I mean I like terrible stuff too perhaps – then the student will be engaged and will be easy to teach. I think I can make this assumption primarily because of the type of students I teach and the selective nature of the school. The theory behind this is that these texts stimulate a higher level of thought and engagement, and allow them to make connections between far ranging concepts and concrete things. For example with *Gatsby* we can talk about very large conceptual issues, and even in *Mockingbird* sure they can talk about racism and prejudice, but they can look at growing up and the idea of questioning your own society that comes out with Scout, so there are very big concepts that we can look at. And I think you can do that because they actually are objectively good texts, which you can use as a launching pad to hit them with some big ideas about the world around them. I think this is the central point, as I don't think that I need to teach them how to deconstruct a text, because they can already do that. We start from the assumption that they know how to do that, and they prove that they can in Year 7 and so by Stage 5 we need to go beyond that, in fact they want to go beyond that, if we keep going on with that sort of thing we lose the kids, they'll tune out, they won't see it as relevant. We have to continually try and teach them something new.

This time round *Gatsby* wasn't as successful as the previous year. I did it again also for the pragmatic reasons of preparation, but last year I had a very talented class, while this year they were not as talented and in fact I wasn't really planning on doing it with them, but I left my selection too late and it was the only text available in the book-room at that point. I was going to teach them *Catcher in the Rye* as a matter of fact which is great and frustrating and probably they would've liked it more, but we were out of them. We are a public school, so it's not like I can tell them to go out and buy an extra set for me as there are no funds. So I taught them *Gatsby* because it was there.

The class this year would've related better to *Catcher*, even though the top students were engaged with *Gatsby*. I think *Catcher* might've worked better mainly because of the voice and the issues it looks at. My class this year was more immature in terms of their experience, particularly with regards to the dominant characters. I think they would've liked the simpler idea of a kid breaking down, getting angry, paying a prostitute to talk and so on much more than they did *Gatsby*.

Obviously I tried to teach the text differently because of the ability level of the class, but still it wasn't as successful as I had hoped it would be. I think the bottom ten students really hated it, and the style particularly is what alienated them. The first chapter of *Gatsby* is, according to me, very well written, but for most students it's something they aren't ready for. Many of them have just finished reading *Twilight* you know, so even though some students can do that, for the majority it's a massive jump and they can't do it. For the future even though I would do it again I need to be more discerning with *Gatsby*. It's not like *Mockingbird* which always works. It has never not worked. It always works, it's like magic.

Drama

Again like the previous year I taught *Romeo and Juliet* to the Year 9 class and *Macbeth* to my Year 10 class. Also I made use of *The Crucible*, in the sense that I didn't necessarily teach it, but I used it as an example for a few kids that were going quite well while we were doing *Gatsby* and I wanted to give them another text that was similar in terms of concepts.

Although we taught the same texts for drama, we are considering changing the way we teach them, particularly with regards to *Macbeth*. Or maybe it's just me, I want to change that, I don't like it.

The Crucible however I taught four years ago, I had some kids that got through *Gatsby* really quickly, since I think the concepts we are looking at are pretty easy, so I gave it to them, and I prepared some notes for them because they wanted to talk about it and make connections to it when it came to the assessment.

Romeo and Juliet always works. I think every school in New South Wales teaches it in Year 9, and it always works as I explained last time. They are always amazed by it.

Macbeth alienates a lot of students, and I think it is because of the way we teach it, especially with the Polanski version. Also for some, the coding of the 1950s Kurosawa *Throne of Blood* is really inaccessible.

I wouldn't mind attempting some non-Shakespeare drama with Year 10, for example *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, or something else unique. And also I'd like to do it under a different guise and not as a Text and Context unit.

Poetry

This year in Year 9 I have actually taught no poetry at all. I used to teach some after their yearly exams, and you know what kids are like by the end of the year they're not very interested. So I would just choose poems that I liked that I think the kids would get. Not very complex poetry, but with strong images, like Frost and so on. I usually teach them for as long as I can keep the students interested in them. Sometimes I could get three weeks out of it, and the last two weeks I would lose them, but I was happy because at least they got something. But this year we didn't even do that.

In Year 10 they did an Australian anthology of poetry. The year before they did Skrzynecki, and I've already spoken about the reasons behind that selection. This year they did some Skrzynecki but we changed that because we felt that an anthology of Skrzynecki was perhaps not so challenging, and since we wanted to show them a diversity of ideas we

moved away from that. But still I have some issues with the Australian poetry as it ended up being this Ballad and Ode unit again, and once you present it as Australian poetry you start going into the concepts of an Australian identity which is portrayed as this kind of rural, redneck society. You know very sort of white and working class. This is fine, but the way it is expressed in some Australian poetry doesn't really mean anything to the kids. You know like "I love a sunburned country" and all that kind of stuff, I mean it's beautiful isn't it but it's not relevant to anyone. So I think we will go back to looking at something that is not like that. I would even prefer to do someone like Judith Wright, who I don't really like but at least there is some kind of concept underpinning it that is not just "Australia is Brown".

We pride ourselves at our school on our high HSC results and refer to ourselves as an ATAR factory, but we really let the kids down with our approach to poetry in the junior stages. In Year 11 the first poet the students encounter is T.S. Eliot, and this is a massive conceptual step, not just stylistically (even though that is a challenge in itself) and the kids aren't really ready for it. We do *Prufrock*, we do *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*, *Preludes*, *Portrait of a Lady* and *Journey of the Magi*, which is the easiest, but still a pretty advanced poem compared to what they've looked at so far at school. It's an issue for me that we don't in fact do enough poetry in Stage 4 and 5. In Stage 4 they do *The Lady of Shalott*, and I'm not really sure why, and in Year 7 they do a unit on Fantasy, which is so bad. I mean I like fantasy, but this is so bad. They study *Shrek*. We seem to waste time on these things and we don't do poetry. I think it's a problem.

Non-Fiction

Non-fiction is really an issue for us, as we don't really ever seem to do it. We do the reality TV unit I mentioned in the last interview with Year 9 – if you want to classify that as non-fiction. I mean it's not like we do police car chases or anything, but it is open for our own individual selection. I think most Reality TV isn't very good at all, but I do Game Show

Style format ones, you know the ones where participants have to complete specific tasks and are eliminated, and we talk about how it is all constructed and structured and the way it engages them. It works ok, although reality TV in my opinion has passed its used-by-date, and we really want and need to think of a different way to teach that. But honestly I'm struggling with that because I haven't been able to think of something yet.

So I repeated last year's unit using *Australia's Next Top Model*, but since I had a lot more boys in the class this time, and they weren't engaging with it at all, I added another show called *Football Superstar* and we worked on the two shows at the same time. I think it worked better by having the two separate shows, as they are really heavily gendered. They are such low-grade pop-culture. But I have to also say that I was able to teach it somewhat differently this year, as the way we are set up in class has changed a lot. I now have a SMART Interactive White Board in my class and I can hook up my laptop to it and show YouTube clips of the episodes which I have previously selected. So I can show entire episodes, or single moments. I can sort of select what I want to show them in that way. I don't need to stick to a single season or anything like that. The episodes are sometimes old, sometimes new, and I can follow concepts more closely in this way as I have a larger video base to choose from. It's not just a "here watch this" sort of unit, it is thought through.

It's funny because I say all these things about the Reality TV Unit, and it's true it is garbage at the level of text, and all the kids agree it's garbage – even though they love it – but then you turn around, and the ideas that are in it are not always simplistic. We ask who is responsible for this kind of TV, in the sense of who wants it, and we actually get them to script and design their own Reality TV show, and they have to explain why it would work and all that. So in the end the concepts we look at are pretty good in themselves because they make the connections to their own world I guess, and to society and its values. We often talk about high order thinking, and we have very gifted and talented kids and we assume that

they all are since they all passed the test to get in. If we assume this we can't work on the basic lower order thinking, or you'll lose them in three days. And the students themselves know. They judge you on what you know, and sometimes you really do feel it. So I think that's why we do this unit.

In Year 10 I think we are a little bit dodgy, in the sense that we show them a couple of episodes of *Frontline* and try to claim it as non-fiction even though that is ridiculous and we really can't do that. The non-fiction that we usually use in the HSC is *Romulus my Father*, which is an autobiography, but is also very much written like a novel in many ways, because of how he writes it. But this year two of us aren't going to do that, we are going to do the speeches instead. But this focus on a quasi-novelised autobiography for the HSC allows us to safely ignore non-fiction texts in previous stages, as we do not need to focus on it as a particular form, or examine what is unique to that particular text type, since for the HSC we are practically just looking at what is really more or less just a novel.

For the future I would like to get rid of Reality TV and do mockumentaries. But I'm not sure yet how to work that.

Film

Again for our films we did exactly what we did the previous year. We did *Romeo and Juliet* with Year 9, and Polanski's *Macbeth* and *Throne of Blood* in Year 10. All our films are about Shakespeare, which is a problem because we use them for the Text in Context ideas that come up in Module A in Stage 6 where they compare *1984* with the movie *Gattaca*. But in Stage 6 these texts have two very distinct contexts and ideas and the kids have to find conceptual commonalities to talk about. But I have an issue with their preparation for this since they do Shakespeare as a film in Year 9 and redo it also in Year 10, and everything is more or less the same. I mean I know that *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* are different but there is a lot that is similar when they have to talk about the text in its context. So we've

thought about changing it, so that we would do a film not with Shakespeare but with a novel in Year 10, so the two texts are not so obviously related or derivative. The reason is that the unit ends up being all about the idea of transformation, which is not what the kids need to do. It is a concept that is challenging, but not necessarily relevant. The idea behind it is that they read the play and they need to consider the influence Shakespeare's time and context has on what he is trying to say, what values of his time are apparent in the text, and all those types of things. Then they look at a future version of the same text, like a film and they talk about it following the same line. The problem is that with *Macbeth* and Polanski's *Macbeth* for example the whole point of what Polanski was really trying to do is simply a traditional portrayal of the play. I find it difficult to talk about that because I end up saying really contrived things like "oh there is violence in it because the Vietnam War is going on", or something else ridiculous so I feel sick when I say these things. So I end up saying the same things, and I hate the repetition anyway, and the students can tell. For example if I talk about gender, and femininity in *Romeo and Juliet* with the Year 9 class, and then I go to my Year 10 class and look at the same topic and just repeat myself. I mean it is slightly different but it is more or less the same thing, and it's not changing because I repeat it or anything.

Next year I want to do *Macbeth* but looking at the concept of Power and so I'm looking for a film to use for that unit of work. Or scrap the film for *Macbeth* and do it with The Individual and Society unit (with *Gatsby* or *Catcher*). We could in this way choose a much more interesting film I think.

Every Day Texts

I seem to have a problem defining what these are, and really understanding what I'm meant to do with them. I make a lot of use of these smaller every day texts with my Year 11 class, but less so with my Stage 5 classes. I show the students the odd political cartoon, not in terms of analysis or anything further than just showing it to them really.

I suppose you could count YouTube clips as every day texts these days, particularly the shorter ones. So I don't know, but often when I'm teaching something, for example I was teaching the significance of poetry, I showed them a clip from a movie. I don't know why I thought of it, but it sort of worked. I showed them clips where people read a poem and it is really strong. For example we watched the scene in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* when they read *Stop all The Clocks*, and there is another one which is pretty much a ridiculous film called *Mike Basset Football Manager* where he recites Kipling's *If*. He is about to get the sack, and the reporters are really getting in to him, and he just starts reciting the poem and everyone turns, like the supporters get behind him and all that. So I guess I use that sort of stuff. I try to show the kids the relevance of YouTube in that way. I show the political cartoons more about topical things, so for instance with what was going on in Burma. We were talking about the idea of freedom in class that came up with something that we were doing and I would show them some cartoons that were relevant. I mean it's more just stuff that I more or less improvise the night before while I'm reading the newspaper or something, so I can download it and put it up on the screen these days so it's even easier to do and convenient.

5.9.1 Discussion

Troy's selection process is influenced above all by his personal value judgement of a text, and by what he believes he can achieve with his class through the close interaction with a higher order text. This is clearly discernible when he states:

I select the texts primarily because I like them, particularly the novels, but I also feel there is a conceptual merit that is worth studying. I also start from the assumption that if I like them and they are valid – I mean I like terrible stuff too perhaps – then the student will be engaged and will be easy to teach... The theory behind this is that these texts stimulate a

higher level of thought and engagement, and allow them to make connections between far ranging concepts and concrete things.

His Year 9 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* and his Year 10 novel *The Great Gatsby* allow him to approach “*very large conceptual issues*”. The reason this is possible is that according to Troy these “*are objectively good texts, which you can use as a launching pad to hit them with some big ideas about the world around them*”.

The motivations guiding his selection of the above mentioned novels has been examined in Chapter 4, since these are the same two texts he taught the previous year. However, last year’s experience had left him with a feeling of empowerment stemming from his secretive and successful breaking away from the established Year 10 program with his teaching of *Gatsby*. That success mistakenly led him to assume it would work across all ability levels. Thinking back to his experience he states: “*last year I had a very talented class, while this year they were not as talented*”. He recognises that in “*the future even though I would do it again I need to be more discerning with Gatsby*”. Upon reflection Troy appreciates the need to assess and constantly re-evaluate his personal valuing of a text against his particular class’ ability level. The *theory* Troy mentions above in which these advanced “*texts stimulate a higher level of thought and engagement*” needs to take into consideration the students’ varying levels of ability more earnestly.

In contrast with the previous year, Troy taught a variety of short stories. This is an important change, since it stems from Troy’s own proposal and as such is “*an entirely new thing in the school*”:

I came up with this idea that we needed to do much more in order to teach the kids to improve in terms of their writing particularly with their creative writing. In fact a lot of our kids have problems with writing short stories, and since a lot of them end up doing Extension 1 for their HSC, it is a problem because when they come to do that, if they write using

simplistic structures, or one dimensional characters, or simplistic plot-lines, or whatever it is, it turns out to be complete garbage and it gets taken apart and drilled by the examiners.

The inclusion of these short stories was therefore aimed at fulfilling a series of *Curricular Principles* (Protherough, 1983), particularly with regards to the children's future needs as advanced students of English. Troy's guiding principles of selection are quite visible in his influence in structuring this new unit. The short stories were not exclusively read as a skills exercise, but more importantly, he wanted to help his students understand why *"these stories are actually good"*. This idea of a universal and recognised value which allows him to declare a text as *"good"* is continually present in Troy's justification of his selections. Experiencing texts that are *good* allows him to show his students where their value resides, and can teach them to become aware of how the text engages the reader and expresses its pathos.

Poetry is always an issue for Troy, as he believes it is an undervalued type of text in School D. It is undervalued since it is not taught at all in Year 9, and according to Troy in Year 10 the students are made to endure the wrong types of poetry, which only results in students being completely alienated by them. As outlined in Chapter 3, School D's mission statement highlights the multicultural nature of the school, with 80% of students having a Language Background Other than English, for a total of 47 different languages. Given this context, Troy is perplexed by the faculty's choice of poetry in Year 10. His class worked on an Australian anthology of poetry, which

ended up being this Ballad and Ode unit again ... going into the concepts of an Australian identity which is portrayed as this kind of rural, redneck society. You know very sort of white and working class ... the way it is expressed in some Australian poetry doesn't really mean anything to the kids. You know like "I love a sunburned country" and all that kind of stuff, I mean it's beautiful isn't it but it's not relevant to anyone.

Troy's disillusionment with the unit is not based on his evaluation of the quality of the poetry in a literary or linguistic sense, but rather with the concepts it explores, which he believes are facile and tend to alienate his students who struggle to find such topics relevant to their lives. *Concepts* are always what guide Troy in his selections. He values *concepts* even above his own personal preferences:

I think we will go back to looking at something that is not like that. I would even prefer to do someone like Judith Wright, who I don't really like but at least there is some kind of concept underpinning it that is not just "Australia is Brown".

Interestingly, when Troy's musings regarding his selection practices are disconnected from a text, ideas regarding universal value, the canon, personal preferences and literary worth dominate his recognised influences. However when he justifies his selections, or distances himself from his faculty's decisions, he more readily acknowledges the influence his students' tastes, levels of engagement and gender have on his selection process. This is evident in his assessment of the role gender plays in his selections. In Part 1 of the second interview Troy dismisses gender as a non-influential factor. However when describing his approach to his Year 10 non-fiction texts, he recognises them as being "*really heavily gendered*" and admits he adapted last year's unit by inserting a text his male students would more readily engage with:

I repeated last year's unit using Australia's Next Top Model, but since I had a lot more boys in the class this time, and they weren't engaging with it at all, I added another show called Football Superstar and we worked on the two shows at the same time.

As a beginning teacher Troy is aware he is continuing to develop his selection strategies. In these first two interviews he has displayed a conscious and well thought out theoretical selection criteria which he professes to follow. Nevertheless what is becoming

apparent is his ability to move away from his pre-established theoretical model of selection when confronted with the real world practicalities of faculty policy, class ability and gender.

Chapter 6 – Third Interview

Development of Initial Impressions, Changes in Context and Third Narrative

6.1 The Interview

The third and final interview of the series continues the work begun in the previous two sessions by looking back on the previous year (2010) and examining the current year being taught (2011). It builds on the last section of the second interview by identifying and combining the theoretical with the practical.

The third interview was conducted at the very beginning of the school year. All four teachers were interviewed within the first four weeks of Term 1. As with the previous interviews, the timing of this final interview was of crucial importance as it was intended to meet the teachers at the beginning of their teaching cycle (truthfully there are neither *beginnings* nor *endings* to the turning of a circular cycle, but it is *a beginning*). It is in this particular moment that the cycle of selection is at its clearest: having reflected on last year's successes and failures, the teachers select texts for the new year.

The interview begins with a previously compiled list (based on the second interview transcripts) of texts taught by the teacher the preceding year (2010). With this list in hand the teachers look back on all texts taught last year and answer questions relating to their relative success or failure. He/she is asked if each particular text is being taught again this year, examining and reassessing the reasons behind its original selection and comparing them to the actual concrete experience of teaching it. Here the teachers have the chance to explain in detail if and in what way their process of selection (both for this particular text and in general) has now been influenced or affected by the previous year's experience with

the text. This is important as the teachers may be teaching a particular text again but the reasons behind its selection may have completely or substantially changed. They may be using the same text with a different class ability level, or for differing purposes, or as part of a different thematic unit or genre study. Understanding the factors embedded within their recent teaching experience which have brought about this change in the reasons for selection must be understood.

The interview continues by asking the consistent questions which have been at the centre of the interview process from the very beginning: What texts have you taught so far this year? What texts will you teach this year? Why are these worth teaching? Again teachers participate in this process of *justifying, judging, evaluating, assessing, appraising and predicting*, completing a process which has encompassed three years of teaching practice, from 2009 to 2011.

This final interview was aimed at bringing this narrative of selection full circle, and in fact ends with an almost incongruous shift away from the temporal linearity of the chronological narrative by having teachers look back and reflect on their developing text selection process and how this has changed and matured over these past three years. Nevertheless the centrality of the text as a starting point for all discussion remains also in this part of the interview as the teachers are asked to provide concrete examples of particular texts that have influenced this change in their selection process, or confirmed their particular point of view. This section of the interview was particularly pertinent to the two early career teachers who had begun the interviews with less than five years teaching experience, as it is in this period that teachers tend to focus on developing and consolidating pedagogical content knowledge and may begin to show the effects of early teacher dissatisfaction, disillusionment and frustration (Ewing and Manuel, 2005). Thus listening to these early career teachers examine and reassess their own general criteria and theories for

text selection based on these first years of teaching, while making reference to specific texts taught within these last three years was particularly insightful. This in no way takes away from the importance of listening to the more experienced teachers in the sample, as they themselves – although perhaps already formed in their ways – were experiencing important shifts in their own teaching contexts which impacted on their selection criteria.

The last part of the third interview continues on from the final section of the second interview by looking at the changes in the practical process of text selection – including all the practical limitations – and how these changes have affected the teachers' own selection process since the interviews started. This final section looks at the changing nature of faculty policies, leadership changes, increases in personal workplace power, and other practical context dependent factors influencing the selection process.

This third interview chapter will not conclude with a discussion section. This was intended to allow the teachers themselves to have the final word in describing their selection strategies. Furthermore the thesis' final chapter will bring all three interview results together into a coalescent conclusion.

6.2 Michael's Third Interview Part 1

As outlined in Chapter 4.1, Part 1 of the third interview deals with two aspects of the teachers' selection process, and their reflections on it. Firstly, as this is the final interview, the teachers will be able to express in what ways their original impressions and ideas regarding the topic at hand have developed over the course of the research. This is an opportunity for them to expound on their general ideas regarding text selection, and what they deem to be the most important factors influencing their choices.

The second half of Part 1 of this interview deals with the changes that have been occurring in the teachers' own teaching contexts and how these have impacted on their selection process, particularly at the practical level.

Both sections in Part 1 of this interview will be examined in relation with the two sections in Part 1 of the first interview as they are closely related and highlight the impact the passing of time and the changes in contexts have on teacher selection of texts for their classroom.

6.2.1 Development of Initial Impressions and General Selection Commentary

Michael admits that there are more external factors weighing heavily on his selection process this last year than he had ever experienced before. One of these is *Availability*, which is *"something that seems to be playing a bigger role in selecting texts with every year that passes."* He believes a reason for this may be the ever growing attitude of presenting the same texts across the board for all English classes in a particular year, as there is a limit to how many full-form sets of a particular text are available in a school. At present this has led him to feel somewhat limited by the selection decisions made by his predecessors, as the school book-room is full of texts he personally would not have ever chosen.

If you go in a book-room at any school, you can pretty much develop a good idea of who the head teachers have more or less been in the past...and understand the mentality behind the specific faculty policies/traditions.

School Tradition is something that limits Michael in his selection of texts, particularly as he believes his school's particular *Tradition* has led to

very few texts being taught each year. The students don't read enough; we do a text per term, whereas the English Teachers' Association has a template supporting at least two texts per term, which would allow us to do at least one extra novel per year...The kids need to read; if we don't get them to read in English then what are we doing?

Michael feels very strongly about this. He believes that in School A not enough texts are taught. Specifically, the students are exposed to far too little Shakespeare:

At the moment they don't do it in Year 7 or 8. They do an introduction to Shakespeare in Year 9, and usually Macbeth in Year 10. However three of the five Year 10 classes this year are looking only at a graphic novel version of Macbeth, so if they don't end up doing Advanced English in Year 11, their entire experience of Shakespeare at school is a graphic novel.

He goes on to explain that good non-Shakespeare drama is difficult to find, and so rather than teaching something terrible they limit the study of drama to Shakespeare. However since so little Shakespeare is actually studied, there are not enough drama texts being taught.

This dearth of texts also extends in his opinion to poetry where there is only a small poetry unit in Year 7 and poetry texts are used for the next three years mainly as supportive texts. Thus *"the only real experience of a full poetry unit happens in Year 11."*

This is very problematic for Michael, as part of his philosophy of selection (as highlighted in Chapter 4.2) revolves around the concept of exposing students to things they have not yet encountered, will not probably encounter on their own, and that can stay with them even beyond school. However since both poetry and Shakespeare are rarely experienced beyond school (unless one continues on to study English at a higher level), Michael firmly states: *"we are failing them."* For Michael this failure is connected both to the

number and the quality of texts being selected by the faculty, as these are sometimes texts that have no *“literary merit...and a good reader can finish them in one sitting.”*

Michael’s recent arrival in the faculty also creates difficulties, as the staff objects to his proposals, *“as they believe a focus on reading is old fashioned and outdated.”* Again he believes that this mentality is a fruit of his predecessor’s programming philosophy:

The mentality here is to give not-so-challenging texts to the students, but then ask them to interact with them at a higher level...This is a valid way of working, but it is not my preferred way. We can go a step further and have students working at that high level with rigorous texts.

However, external constraints such as staff resistance to change and the impossibility of finding time to *“think about and look for better texts”* makes changing things difficult.

All the above are *external* factors limiting his choices, but his own personal ideas regarding the selection of texts are very clear to him and have for the most part remained constant throughout the interview process:

My general idea regarding the selection of texts has remained the same these last three years. The texts need to be engaging, have some literary merit, expose the students to new things they would not encounter on their own, and need to be selected according to class ability. Not all texts cater for all classes, and thus knowledge of the students’ ability levels is a crucial determining factor.

6.2.2 Changes in Teaching Context

During the third interview Michael had just begun his second year at School A in the position of head teacher. As examined in the previous interviews, because of pre-existing programs and a strong sense of school tradition, Michael’s entry into the faculty was quite

problematic. This was especially true given his strong convictions and clear view of what he wanted both from the staff and the students.

Things have begun to change for Michael, but perhaps not as much as he was hoping:

This being my second year at the school, things seem to be going better, and I am understanding the school context and traditions a little bit better. But as I've pointed out, the problems with the way the staff views my proposed changes have remained.

He has always worked in a collaborative way with his staff in other schools, and believes in the value of collegiality, but he is finding things quite difficult in School A as the teachers complain that he is too strict, and that he enforces his will *"like a despot, instead of fostering a more collegial process."* Although this situation does not stop him from developing his vision for the school English program, it does have an impact on him personally: *"This is very time consuming and takes a toll on my morale, as I had never experienced this in other schools, and find it hard to understand or accept."*

6.3 Michael's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection

Reflection on all Texts Taught Last Year (2010) - (No Stage 5 for 2011)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Last Year I taught *To Kill a Mockingbird* with my Year 10 class, and I have those same students in Year 11 now, and the way they talk about *Mockingbird* really highlights for me how good that text is for that age group. In that class there are kids who have come in for

the senior years from other schools and all they did last year was some Marsden text. Listening to their peers they really feel like they have missed out. So I'm glad that I taught it and it worked really well. It did what I wanted it to do and had a deep impact on the kids. Still I am aware that I am choosing a text that a lot of people value and since our last interview I have been thinking about why it is valued, and where this value lies. These questions have become more important for me this last year, and since they do play a role in my selection process, I need to try and answer them more satisfactorily. *Mockingbird* is a fairly challenging text for a Year 10 boy, and the issue of racism is something relevant which unfortunately is always going to be around, whether it is in Australia or America. Also the fact that at the end of the day "justice" does not win is something the kids can get really fired up about, and it shows that they care about what they have read. It is a text that they will remember, and compared to what some of the new students did in their previous schools it is a text that they themselves deem to be "worth reading" because it had an impact on the way they view the world.

This year I am not teaching Stage 5 and so I am not teaching *Mockingbird*. Unfortunately I was not able to change the program so that all the students in Year 10 have to read it. I think I may have been able to if I had fought for it, but since I am not teaching Year 10 this year it was one fight I thought I could do without. As head teacher, at the end of last year I initiated a lot of conversations about the programs we were using in the faculty from 7 to 12. I don't want to say it got ugly, but it got to a stage where it became very personal for some teachers, and that is not what you want, but unfortunately it is what always happens with English staff. So I had to choose my battles, and I decided to focus on the ones which affected me the most. Also some teachers who were very vocal about their objections towards me and my way of doing things have left, and so I didn't want to be seen as the scary teacher sending the other teachers away.

Last interview I think I mentioned several short stories that were in the program, but I didn't end up teaching them. In reality there isn't such a big focus on them in Year 10, as we do a long unit on short stories in Year 9. So I didn't use any Henry Lawson, but I highly recommend them for this age group as they are quality texts the students enjoy.

Drama

Whenever I talk to other teachers, for example at conferences or in-services, they confirm that practically almost every school in New South Wales does *Macbeth* in Year 10. Because of this I have always tried to include other Shakespeare texts in Year 10, maybe because I'm difficult, but I think that it is unlikely that a single text can work every time for every type of class and ability level. So in the past I taught *Henry IV* with enormous success, and not just in my class, but across the form. I think the reason we always go back to *Macbeth* is because there is so much resource material available on it that it is easy to teach with minimal preparation.

Macbeth is good. There is enough violence to keep the boys engaged, the story is interesting and I don't have major issues with it. I just don't think it is the best text you can do in Year 10. Nevertheless we worked through it well in class, and the kids enjoyed it, so maybe it is just me being difficult.

Macbeth is being taught again this year in Year 10, and again it is the first text that they look at, and I still think that is a terrible idea. There is a new teacher who has been given the top Year 10 class, and she'll have to walk in blind without knowing the ability level of her class at all and teach a very difficult Shakespeare text. I was able to insert a short 3-week writing unit at the beginning of Term 1 to try and avoid this situation, but it is already causing a lot of problems for some teachers, because now it has left too little time to teach *Macbeth*, and so I have to find another solution for that.

Poetry

As I said last time we don't really have a poetry unit at the school in Year 10, so I did a variety of poetry, mainly as support texts the whole way through the year. Also we used poetry as part of their School Certificate preparation. I did some Robert Frost, and it went very well and again as I said for *Mockingbird* these poems have helped them prepare for Year 11 where we look at some pretty complex poetry like Eliot. I will absolutely do Frost again in Year 10, and I know that the students always enjoy his poetry. We weren't able to get to Kath Walker as there wasn't enough time.

Non-Fiction

In non-fiction last year with my Year 10 class I did *Bowling for Columbine*, and it was a very successful text that I would teach again for any ability level. I think it is a very good text to do in conjunction with *To Kill a Mockingbird*, particularly at this age where the kids are beginning to see the world around them. I mean I acknowledge it is a really biased text, but it does work for what it tries to do.

The other text we did was *Man Vs Wild* and we looked at several episodes, and the kids liked it and it worked at a basic level, but it is the type of text that the kids would encounter on their own anyway, so I think it is a bit of a waste of time to do it at school, so I wouldn't do it again unless I had no other option.

The Travel Blog was something we did look at, but in reality although I thought it was something I could use, I wasn't too sure what to do with it, and so we really didn't do much on it.

Non-fiction in my opinion is a very difficult part of the English course because there aren't that many texts that are engaging, and so we end up using stereotypical things like *Soldier Boy*, or *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which is what every school has in the book-room.

These texts have a very limited appeal, especially in such a multicultural school like this one. I think that non-fiction should be the place where we can look for and do a lot of Aboriginal texts, and yet I can't find anything appropriate for the students at this level. I need to look long and hard I think and find something that I can really say I am happy with. It bothers me to waste the opportunity and do a text that is "just OK". We only get to teach these students in Year 10 once, and if we don't make the best of it, then we are letting them down.

Film

The film we looked at in Year 10 last year was *Yolngu Boy*, and it is in the program this year as well. It is an interesting film, but I don't think it helps with regards to improving the way Aborigines are viewed by the student population, or by impacting on the Aboriginal Cause in any way. There are these three boys who are always making very bad decisions, and one ends up dying, at the end of the film, and I think that it would be more useful to try and focus on a different Aboriginal perspective. Tragedies like this are frequently on the news, and so the students are somewhat aware of them anyway, and I think it only re-enforces a sense of failure of the Aboriginal way. I'd like to find a text that can portray the positive aspects of Aboriginal culture, and the current situation, but I haven't found one yet. A positive aspect of this film is that it allows us to tick the box with regards to the Aboriginal Perspectives requirements on the Syllabus.

The film was connected to the Coming of Age unit we did with *To Kill a Mockingbird* and they did work well together, so in a certain sense the unit was a success, but I still think we can improve on it. The problem with it is that in the end the students were laughing about it, laughing at the situations, which were not funny but tragic. So with our students it fails in its intent. I spoke to some Aboriginal kids that are in Year 12 this year and asked them if they had liked it when they were in Year 10, and they didn't. In fact they found it in some ways embarrassing.

For the assessment task the students had to talk about the film, so it did give them a sense that it was an important text but they mostly still focused on *Mockingbird*.

Every Day Texts

We did a variety of every day texts in Year 10 last year in the non-fiction unit, and we also looked at that skin cancer video I mentioned last time we spoke. I really hated teaching that unit, and I think that the majority of the teachers felt the same. Unfortunately one of the teachers who pushes for this text actually helped put it together, so it has this untouchable position on the program. I never want to teach it again, and if I ever have Year 10 again I will push for it to be removed from the program, but for now all I managed to do was reduce the amount of time we waste on it, so it isn't a seven week unit anymore but only goes for three weeks. Again this was an example of me as head teacher picking which battles were worth fighting, and which ones I could let go for now. It is not a terrible text to use to teach visual literacy, but there are so many better ones that you could use, and so the inclusion of this particular text is really unjustifiable. The focus in a unit like this, in the end is the production of their own video clip. This is problematic because of the sheer enormous amount of time it takes to put together a three minute clip. We do very little of it in class, so that after they have scripted it they have to spend hours working on it on their own time, and I think it is a waste of time. We could be getting them to do other things which they need more than video editing. There is no requirement to produce digital media in the Syllabus, so I don't understand why we spend so much time on it. Who are we trying to impress? The kids do like it, so in the end it is the teachers who have a problem with it, but that is often indicative that there is a problem with the text.

6.4 David's Third Interview Part 1

6.4.1 Development of Initial Impressions, and General Selection Commentary

Like Michael, David is an experienced teacher with more than 15 years teaching experience and like Michael his general ideas and impressions regarding the selection of texts for Stage 5 English have not changed much over the course of the three interviews. He does admit however that these ideas have only really crystallised fully in these last few years, and perhaps the interviews have helped make concrete what before was only professional intuition.

In this interview David closely echoes his initial responses to the first interview conducted over 12 months before, focusing again on the concept of student engagement, and on his professional ability and responsibility to find texts which engage the students.

For me text selection is all about student engagement, and it is a concept that has come to the forefront of my selection strategies these last couple of years.

He uses the film *Puberty Blues* to highlight the far more important value of student engagement over simple universal or canonical worth:

Sure it is a film, and many people might not rate it, but what I am able to achieve with that text because of the very high student engagement levels...is amazing.

He has a very simple explanation for this:

The students connect with the text and when they do, everything else just happens easily. Obviously it isn't a great literary text, but its usefulness in the class outweighs its absence from the film canon. Who cares if a film or

a text is considered great by the academics or the critics if the students aren't going to engage with it?

For David it is all about *engagement*, and his role is to make sure the right texts are selected for the right class. He recognises the importance of this aspect of his teaching craft, which *"starts even before I enter in class, in the selection of the texts themselves."* This aspect of his professional craft has developed over time, and although – by his own admission – he doesn't always get it right, he has matured a deep understanding of *"what the students will and will not engage with."*

There have been instances where students have been rather recalcitrant with some texts David has selected but generally he selects the most suitable text for the appropriate class. This is important, as he states: *"I find that if I choose the right text beforehand, then everything else just falls into place."*

6.4.2 Changes in Teaching Context

For David since the interviews began there have been two major changes in his teaching context. Firstly at the time of the final interview he was now working only four days a week, dedicating the fifth day to other pursuits including some possible tertiary teaching involvement. More importantly, there was a new head teacher who had just started in the school the previous year *"who has been trying to regulate us and make us more accountable in our teaching."* Interestingly David does not have any qualms with the major changes the new head teacher is bringing. He believes that *"the extra programming is quite useful"* and does not feel at all limited or constrained by the changes. Possibly the reason behind this very positive attitude is the fact that the changes were organised very collegially: *"Watching*

this change happening in the faculty has been really good, as I was able to participate actively in it.” This re-designing of the entire English faculty programs

came together without the burden of previous value systems encumbering it and so we were able to really come up with what we thought was the best thing to go with.

David sums it all up in two major concepts: *“engagement and high intellectual quality.”* It is only through selecting the right texts as a whole faculty that David believes teachers can successfully work towards these two important focus points.

6.5 David’s Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection

This year (2011) I have a Year 9 and a Year 10 class, as I did last year as well. I am also teaching senior classes, but since I am only teaching four days a week this year, I have missed out on the junior classes, so I have no Year 7 or Year 8 this year. The Year 10 class is not the same group as last year’s Year 9 class and in fact is an advanced class, while the Year 9 is a mixed ability class.

Reflection on all Texts Taught Last year (2010) and Texts Being Taught This Year (2011)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Last year for Year 9 I taught *I Am the Cheese* as part of a Survival area of study. The same novel has been selected this year but we are using it as a genre study, and the genre is Teen Experience. So even though it is the same text our approach to it will be different. It fits because it is about a young person and his experience as is a lot of Cormier’s work. The

other text that could've been chosen was *Looking for Alibrandi*. My choice is based on my past experience with the text as I've always found it a text that the students respond well to and engage with. Also, knowing the ability level of the class, I think it is a text that they will be able to work through without too much difficulty. Last year's experience has re-enforced my idea about this text as being one that I can successfully present to the students as it is manageable and not too long for students at this level, and the story usually keeps the kids engaged. I'm not sure if I would use this text with a higher ability class, and I would have probably selected *Looking for Alibrandi* if the ability level was higher. Some years ago I probably would've felt that *Alibrandi* wasn't very relevant in an all-boys mainly-Anglo school, but that has changed somewhat as we have quite a number of students from a range of backgrounds these days.

For the Survival unit we are reading *Lord of the Flies* this year.

Short stories were also a component of our imaginative texts selection for Year 9 and we looked at a range of stories, both for appreciation (I usually read these stories to the kids) and for comprehension activities. This year we will look at the same range of novels but I am also looking to include some picture books and at least one graphic novel for my Year 9 class, as I think there are some real quality graphic novels out there that have a lot to say to the kids.

With my Year 10 class last year I taught *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and other options available included *The Power of One* and *The Chocolate War*. This year I'm teaching this again in the Justice and Discrimination area of study and it is the core text of the unit. With a lower ability class I would substitute *Mockingbird* with a film called *Mississippi Burning*, which some classes did last year and I actually did as a supportive text to the novel.

Another novel we will look at this year is *Tomorrow When the War Began* which will be done with a film in our Science Fiction genre study.

Drama

My Year 9 class last year read *The Removalists*, but this year I am planning to teach *The Club* as I mentioned I think in our last Interview. I will start this in Term 2, and even though I really wanted to teach it, there is also a practical reason why I can't teach *The Removalists* this year, and that is because we actually don't have enough copies. So that's the stark reality. I mean we could order more, and we probably will at some stage as the boys actually quite like the text. But I think the students will really engage with *The Club*, as a lot of students are quite sporty, and it is a very masculine text in a lot of ways. Having said that, in the Teen Experience genre study we are very conscious not to focus solely on a male perspective and that is why we have texts like *Puberty Blues* and *Looking for Alibrandi* on the program as they are entirely from a female perspective.

Last year in Year 10 we studied *Macbeth* and we seem to stick with it every year since it works so well and is a great Shakespeare play to do with boys of this age group, so I taught it this year as well. In fact I don't think anyone taught *The Merchant of Venice* this year, which was the other option available. Looking at a text across the form also allows us to have the same assessment task for all students which is good so that they all find it fair. The consistency with doing *Macbeth* for all the Year 10 classes allows us to have a professional dialogue we haven't had in this school in the past, and encourages communication which is always good. Making Shakespeare relevant is always a challenge, but in this unit by using the supportive texts I used I think I was successful in showing the students why it is worth studying, especially in this day and age where we don't need to go very far to find examples of ambition gone wrong.

Poetry

Year 9 last year didn't have a specific poetry unit, so we looked at a range of poetry. This year we looked at various poetic techniques through a range of poetry, and that is up to

each individual teacher. I will probably not use *Dulce et Decorum Est* with this class, again because I don't think that at this particular ability level they would be able to understand it fully and appreciate it. I would certainly use *No More Boomerang* and the rest but not the Wilfred Owen poetry. Last year's experience with Wilfred Owen highlighted that perhaps for some classes it is a little too difficult as a poem, considering the types of poetry they have been exposed to so far. I would still teach it to a very advanced class, but that is not what I have this year.

With Year 10 we are sticking with what we did last year, and that is the Consumerism unit through the poetry of Bruce Dawe. I will of course supplement that with some other poetry, but the Dawe poems will be the core of the unit and will be what they are assessed on. However I think that sometimes focusing on one single poet limits the experience the students have of poetry and that broadening the range of poets usually keeps them engaged for longer. Also when you look at poetry through the lens of a particular issue – in this case consumerism – you limit the experience even more, and the students begin to see the patterns really quickly and just get bored of it. I am a bit ambivalent with regards to the Bruce Dawe unit, and it isn't all based on personal taste, although that does play a role. Mainly I'm concerned with the level of student engagement with these poems, which I think is quite low. Part of it is because even though it is Australian poetry, some of the issues it looks at are quite foreign to some of the students. We have been teaching this unit for several years and we do it across the form, which is always a positive, and most of the other teachers seem happy with it so I'm happy to roll with it. I did bring it up at our last programming meeting when we were working on our Scope and Sequence, but as a staff we decided to stick with it and since I don't hate it I backed down.

Non Fiction

For Year 9 we did an advertising unit, and we just completed that this year as well. It worked quite well as they really enjoyed the final project where in groups they design a campaign for *Tourism Australia*.

With Year 10 last year for non-fiction we looked at a *Four Corners* episode in connection with our Justice and Discrimination unit, together with *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Mississippi Burning*. I find that sometimes the two other texts in this unit, although they are well liked by the students, are sometimes too far removed in both time and space from the reality of the students' own lived experience. The *Four Corners* episode we look at deals with similar issues, but it is set in 2009 and is in Darwin, so it really brings the issues we look at in this unit closer to home and makes it both more relevant and accessible to the students. The fact that these issues are pertinent to their present time and in their own country helps bring the entire unit into focus by contemporising it for the class. So I will be using it this year as well as it really works quite well.

Film

Last year with Year 9 we watched *Puberty Blues* as part of the Survival unit. Other films we could've done were *Alive*, *The Perfect Storm*, *The Fugitive* and *Touching the Void*. This year there is still the Survival unit, even though the novel has changed, and we will probably do *Puberty Blues* as the kids will respond well to it. It also links in with the Teen Experience genre. Surviving growing up is a topic that the kids need to reflect on, and they tend to produce some great work around it. I think that is because they enjoy it so much. Again this year *Puberty Blues* will be also connected to developing the students essay writing skills. In fact we've just had a staff meeting recently about it where we concluded that we need to push these skills much earlier on in the student's schooling career, as they are essential skills for the HSC, and if you don't build them up early they are hard to recover

later on. Our new head teacher is very organised and has quite high expectations, both of us teachers and the students, and I think we will all benefit from that.

In Year 10 last year I taught *Pleasantville* in conjunction with the Bruce Dawe unit on Consumerism, and *Mississippi Burning* in the Justice and Discrimination unit with *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This Year I think we will look at *Pleasantville* again as the students worked well on it. *Mississippi Burning* is another film I am teaching again this year, even though most classes are not doing it. I find it works well when done together with *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the *Four Corners* episode I spoke about earlier.

As a support text for *Tomorrow When the War Began* novel we will look at *War of the Worlds* in the Science Fiction genre study. We could have actually looked at the film version of *Tomorrow When the War Began*, but reading a novel and then watching the film version of it practically defeats the point of even doing a genre study, so I chose to do *War of the Worlds*. I have not taught the film before, as it is in fact quite recent, but I have taught the novel in the past and am quite familiar with it.

With Shakespeare's *Macbeth* last year with Year 10 we looked at an animated version of the play, and although it worked well and was well received, the animations aren't really that crash hot as it is almost 40 years old and it sort of distracts the students as these days they are used to some amazing graphics. So instead of doing that, we looked at a recent *Macbeth* film with Sam Worthington, which got pretty average reviews, but which the students enjoyed a lot. It is set in Melbourne and it is a really good contemporary adaptation of the play which was filmed in 2006. I can see how some people might not like it but the boys really enjoyed it and I think one thing it had going for it was that it was very violent and I think that this was how these plays were. There's no point sanitising a play like *Macbeth*, or worrying about upsetting people, because these plays were bloody and that's just the way it was. I felt it was a good adaptation and it set it in this underworld of

Melbourne with an *Underbelly* style feel. We finished the text, we discussed a lot of the themes, we looked at the language, we composed an essay and then we looked at this film and the students were totally engaged by it and it really drove the point of the play home with them. For example the scene where McDuff's family is murdered is horrific, and sometimes when you read the play you tend to forget these things. Instead after the film when they reflected back on the written text, they seemed to understand it more, particularly the tragedy of it. The language was also Shakespearean, obviously cut short in some sections, but quite faithful to the play, and I thought it was good.

In connection with the *Macbeth* unit I also showed the class little scenes of *Braveheart*, just to show them the settings and help them understand the period we were looking at. I think that whole *Macbeth* unit was really a little triumph if I can say so myself. There were a lot of students coming with an antipathy towards Shakespeare, not understanding why we were doing it, why it was relevant, and then by the end after the text and the movie, they had really gotten it. Throughout the movie the students were understanding spoken Shakespearean English, and they hadn't even realised it till I pointed it out to them and they were amazed at themselves!

Shakespeare is always a challenge because it is sometimes hard to make it relevant for the students, but I found that doing it like this really worked and I will follow the same structure next time I teach it.

Every Day Texts

In Year 9 we look at everyday texts during our media and advertising unit.

In Year 10 we usually look at a lot of everyday texts in Term 4 after their School Certificate exams where we start to look at senior skills, and skills that are going to be

required later on. So we look at magazines, newspapers and all the range of texts students will encounter in their day to day life.

6.6 Anna's Third Interview Part 1

6.6.1 Development of Initial Impressions, and General Selection Commentary

Anna had been teaching for 5 years when the final interview was conducted, and her general attitude to teaching, text selection and her role as an educator had undergone a serious transformation:

Till now, a driving force behind my selection of texts has been the idea of giving students texts they would not encounter on their own, with a focus on quality and the canon. I suppose now I am looking more in terms of what is expedient.

The reasons behind this shift of focus, is not entirely theoretical or philosophical but rather, it is heavily influenced by the reality that Anna's *"energy levels are getting lower."* This is further highlighted by her statement: *"I find myself thinking of how I can save myself some labour."*

Compared with the earlier interviews in which Anna professed a dedication to the teaching of *Literature*, and the *Canon*, Anna's comments in this final interview show an almost complete turn-around caused by fifth-year fatigue, and what can only be described as disillusionment:

For the first two or three years I had this almost boundless energy where I wanted to impress people in whatever kind of way I could. I tried a lot of things out and sometimes they worked and sometimes they didn't, but it didn't really matter as I was still kind of inexperienced and so I was generally happy anyway.

Now:

I am getting more realistic about what my kids can accomplish. I used to believe that it was important to expose kids not just to the classics, but to things that could stretch them in some sort of way. Now as far as far as I'm concerned I find that I am fighting against too many things when trying to extend kids... I don't think I can really get to where I was hoping to be with my students.

This general disillusionment with what she had originally believed her teaching would bring about has caused her to focus far less on finding texts that can extend the more capable students and more on “*the lowest common denominator in each class.*” While before she searched for the perfect text suitable for a range of abilities, where students could engage with it at different levels (as highlighted in her second interview in Chapter 4.3), now she is looking for a text that can appeal simply to most of the class:

It is ok not to do a text that is perfect in every way, because someone will always dislike what I have selected. In the past I was devastated by that, but now not so much. I am not looking to please people so much anymore, and surely I can't please everybody anyway!

Anna's selection strategies, as well as her more general outlook on teaching have been significantly altered by the increasingly obvious discrepancies between what she expected teaching would be like, and the realities she is encountering every day in her classroom. She expresses this in a significantly longer quote towards the end of the final interview where she reveals a basic factor behind her teaching motivation; a factor that has now been dismantled:

I find I was always hoping to meet myself in one of my classes, or at least one student who is a bit like I was. I loved reading, and I think it goes back to my own history, as I came from a very disadvantage background, where

my parents didn't speak English very well, and were both unemployed, and didn't really have any aspirations for me academically speaking. I see some students in my class, and I recognise the fact that they are coming from a similar socio-cultural background to mine, and I always thought that anyone in the same situation as me would really want to get ahead in some sort of way, or be embarrassed like I was with the low cultural heritage they have when compared to those around them. Instead I find myself constantly disappointed by these particular students' unwillingness to venture out of the confines forced on them by their parents' socio-cultural baggage. I always thought that being conscious of the fact that you are marginalised, or disadvantaged, would urge you to expand your vision of the world, and it upsets me when I see people who just don't seem to care, who just want more of the same, who aren't inquisitive or curious, or possess any of those kind of qualities you hope you will awaken in someone as a learner. I know I sound like I'm just going on about this but I feel that my expectations and my conception of students has just changed a lot. I never thought I was in a minority; I just randomly transferred my experience onto other people and I never really thought that there would be kids who would just say "No! I'm going to reject this outright. I just don't care!"

Today I find I am a bit more realistic, and that is really sad, because if you lose your dream, then what have you got? If you lose your ambitions, and your project, then what is left? Teen fiction? No thanks!

Anna has reached a point where her text selection process – once considered a crucial factor of her teaching – has taken a backseat to the more urgent demands imposed on her by her job, and has begun to focus more on those aspects of teaching which contribute more to her sense of self. This has inevitably led to a more dedicated involvement with her Senior Stage 6 classes, where *“there really isn't that much choice with regards to text selection, but it is so much more interesting to teach.”* This shift of focus from Stage 5 to Stage 6 has been caused in part by the added duties and responsibilities expected of her:

I also feel that even in the time I have been teaching, far more is expected of you. There is a ridiculous amount of admin work, a lot of marking is expected too, and the comments I have to write when marking need to be quite detailed and the reports even more so.

If we contrast this with her attitude to Stage 5 in previous interviews, this change is quite drastic. Anna considered Stage 5 English to be an essential foundation stone which she believed the majority of the staff was under-valuing. She recognises this change in her attitude when she states:

I find thinking about my present Stage 5 selections quite sad, as I realise I used to make much more conscious decisions in the past, and was willing to teach anything and spend a lot more time planning than I do now.

Nevertheless she struggles to act on this, as the more profound professional identity crisis she is experiencing is too overwhelming for her to focus on mere text selection:

All in all I do feel really sad. It's almost like I'll finish this year, and then this is it. I don't know what I'll do sometimes. I've just had a very difficult term, and I found it even more difficult because the students themselves have actually been lovely this term. I'm just beginning to chafe under the workload and have started to think: "Is this really how I want to spend my days?" Just because I'd like to go home and not have to mark on the weekends, or plan for open days, or attend the public speaking nights. I am finding the amount of things I am required to do at school way too much at the moment.

6.6.2 Changes in Teaching Context

At the practical level there have not been extensive changes in Anna's teaching context although there are several minor factors which have been growing in importance over these last few years which she is beginning to feel more uncomfortable with. The first of these is the *"increasing restrictions of what we have time to teach because of NAPLAN*

testing.” Anna worries that the added requirements of NAPLAN testing increase the already numerous things she is expected to do as a teacher. This inevitably leads in her opinion to lower quality texts being taught which are of less actual value to the students.

Secondly, since School C has such a high percentage of Indigenous students (as highlighted in Chapter 3.5), there is an increasing focus on Aboriginal texts in Stage 5. Anna finds this at times problematic for a variety of reasons. To begin with she (like both Michael and David) has difficulty finding *“good, worthwhile and more importantly suitable Aboriginal texts.”* Selecting texts simply because they tick the requirements for Indigenous texts is something she finds difficult to justify:

I would never choose a text just because it is Indigenous. I base my selections on a text having some sort of worthwhile meaning.

Furthermore Anna believes that although some of the Aboriginal texts being studied successfully portray the protagonists as being marginalised, they also tend to show them *“as not very intelligent.”* She questions the usefulness of such texts, particularly because of the extreme focus the school puts on these Indigenous students’ indigenality as if the

other aspects of their lives and personality do not matter. I don’t want to reinforce this in my classroom, as they get enough of it already.

Anna finds that her freedom in her text selection has actually decreased these last two years. She admits that it is not because of faculty policies, or school limitations, but rather it is she who is limiting herself:

I am less willing to search around for new texts...I find I have put more boundaries up myself, and that may or may not be a good thing. It may be a good thing in the sense that I have been trying too hard to do too many things... I’ve read a lot about the life-cycle of a teacher, and they taught it to us at university, and I find I am past the initial phase of enthusiasm and am kind of just wanting to coast a bit more.

6.7 Anna's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection

This year I am teaching two Stage 5 English classes, a Year 9, and a Year 10. They are both middle ability classes. As I said last interview, we have two top classes which are a bit better than average, and then three mixed middle classes which really go all the way to the bottom even though we do have a lower level class with students who are in need of extra help, or who have literacy problems. Some of the more average students from my Year 9 'advanced' class which I probably mentioned last time are now in this middle ability Year 10 class. These students are actually much happier now, and work with more commitment as I am teaching things that they can understand now, like *Looking for Alibrandi* as opposed to *Rebecca*.

Reflection on all Texts Taught Last Year (2010) and Texts Being Taught This Year (2011)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

Last year with my Year 9 class I taught *Rebecca* and it was for a close study of the text unit. The idea was that we looked at the opening of the text and we wrote an essay about it. So the only reason I chose that particular text was that it had such a vivid opening, and in fact I only really did the opening couple of pages with it. This year I am not teaching *Rebecca* as this particular class will not get it. So I am teaching *Saving Francesca* which last year I taught in the unit called The Individual and Conformity where we compared it with *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*.

This year I am using *Saving Francesca* as the Opening of a Novel unit, so we will focus more intently on the opening scenes, with a minor focus on the more advanced

techniques we looked at with *Rebecca*. Compared to *Rebecca*, *Saving Francesca* has an opening with enough techniques that are deliberate enough for them to write about and justify. For example today we looked at the fact that Francesca is an unreliable narrator, and in doing this we picked up all the things that Francesca says about her friends which indicate that she feels they actually are her friends, but we learn later on in the novel that they are actually very fake and not good friends at all. This shows the girls that Francesca's opinions are not only not always correct, but they can't be trusted as she changes them so much throughout the novel. So the reason I didn't do *Rebecca* is not that I don't like it as a text, but I felt that it wouldn't be appropriate for this kind of stream, and they would end up hating it, and probably by default start to hate me as well. I was satisfied with the way *Rebecca* went last year, mainly because it was only the opening. I would never teach the full novel to a group as it is probably too difficult. Nevertheless this is despite the fact that *Rebecca* is a text I did at school myself in Year 7. How times have changed! Another reason I selected *Saving Francesca* is that I wanted to start the year off with something the students could get and relate to without taking them out of their comfort zone, and the familiar setting of the novel itself (which is set in our local area), allows them to access it quite deeply as a text. They are all reading it and they are all loving it, and this helps create a good rapport with the students for me right at the beginning of the year which will be extremely useful with some of the harder texts we will look at later on. An interesting thing we do with *Saving Francesca* is the way we look at some of the social and psychological aspects of it, particularly with friendship groups, and recognising real friends. So the unit is going really well this year and I would teach it again, as the familiar setting really gets the girls going. In fact even though the unit is mainly focused on the opening scenes, I am giving them time to read in class so they can all finish it as they all seem to like reading, which is not the standard situation in this school in my experience.

Last year for the Dystopian Literature unit my Year 9 class looked at *Animal Farm*, but I do not intend to teach it again this year. So for Year 9 this year I will be teaching *A Patch of Blue* by Elizabeth Kata. This change was caused by a shift in our Year 9 program. We used to do a genre study in Term 4, with no assessment task, so you could do something like *Animal Farm* which is a short text which allowed you to look at a lot of smaller snippets from other texts to support it, like *Uglies* for example. Now the genre study unit has been moved to Term 2 and there is a major genre study associated with it, so I won't be doing Dystopian Fiction, because there is too much to learn about that genre. Also, if I were to teach Dystopian Fiction and do it aimed at the assessment task, it is actually something they do in Year 11 Extension 1 English, and although most of my students won't be doing Extension 1, it seems unwise to double up and do the same kind of thing.

So the genre study for this year is Romantic texts, and we will look at *A Patch of Blue*. This is a text I have never taught and I am heavily influenced in my selection by my head teacher who is very fond of this novel. She thinks it's wonderful, so I'd like to teach it. Also because I have usually had a top Year 9 class every year, I have never had the chance to do it, as it's not the type of novel I would use with a higher ability class. I suppose I have a few misgivings about it, as it is about this girl, and her mum is a prostitute, and she gets blinded by one of her mum's boyfriends who throws glass in her eye, and there are some bits I feel I might've found a bit too confronting in Year 9, but this is the era of misery-literature and the girls really dig that sort of thing. This character is someone who has nothing going for her at all, so she might be appealing in that sort of way.

I am still undecided about what novel to teach my year 9 class in Term 3 in the Individual and Conformity unit. I will probably do *Uglies*, as it is a popular novel which they will enjoy without having to leave their comfort zone, as in general I don't think they would like or cope with being taken out of it. When I teach *Uglies*, I always teach an episode from

the *Twilight Zone* called *Number 12 Looks Just Like You*, as the story and themes are exactly the same. It is a futuristic novel about plastic surgery, and looks at how you can be made into a different person.

Again this year in Year 9 I taught the exact same short stories as the previous year. The students really enjoyed *Lamb to the Slaughter*, much more so than my previous class in fact, and I found that curious. I also taught one new story in our Creative Writing unit in Term 1 called *The Landlady* by Dahl. They all were excited to do some Dahl stories, so I ran with it and they got into it and enjoyed it.

On a side note I find that our Year 9 program is excessively obsessed with the novel as a text, especially when compared to our Year 10 program and what I know of other schools. In fact in Year 9 we have three assessment tasks which are focused on the study of three particular sorts of novels. So Year 9 is really novel-heavy, while in Year 10 you only do one novel properly, as well as one non-serious novel in Term 4 where with their leaving early, and the School Certificate, we don't really go very deep at all.

In Year 10 this year we are doing a unit called The Study of a Social Issue Within a Text. Last time I taught Year 10 was in 2008, and have only taught Year 9 for Stage 5 these last three years. The first novel we are doing this year is called *Looking for Alibrandi* and mainly I'm doing it because all the other classes are doing it which is never a good reason in my opinion. I thought the girls would enjoy it as a text, especially in the Social Issue unit we are doing, as I thought we could look at multiculturalism through the text, which I thought would be something close to home for the students, particularly when I had a look at their surnames as it is a very multicultural classroom. I haven't taught it before but I quite like it myself, just like I like *Saving Francesca* which is by the same author. They are not great literature, but they will do. Also there is a film and we could watch a few scenes from it to

support the novel, and I really think the girls can relate to the character. This is done with the film *Footy Legends* as a related text.

Looking for Alibrandi is the only novel set in the Year 10 program, which is not much, especially when compared to the amount of novels we do in Year 9. I do plan to do a verse novel in Term 4, so it will be without an assessment to go with it. It is by Karen Hesse and is called *Out of the Dust*. The structure of the verse novel allows me to focus on certain little sections and revise our understanding of poetic techniques, especially since they will need them in Year 11 the next year. As I mentioned before Term 4 in this school has too many disruptions, and my class in particular has a lot of students with quite a poor attendance record, so it is difficult to do very intense work in the last term.

Drama

Again for drama in year 9 we are all doing *The Taming of the Shrew*, and this is the one text I have had no voice in at all, as we all do it for the Images of Women unit. This will be taught in Term 4, and so has no assessment task associated with it. There are a lot of major disruptions in Term 4, but this is where we have relegated Shakespeare for this year.

In Year 10 we are doing *Romeo and Juliet* this year. It is a whole year text, and we are actually going to go see it next week, before we start reading it in class in Term 2. We are using this text also as a way of preparing them for the School Certificate exams, as their assessment task is a listening task. Interestingly the assessment is not related to *Romeo and Juliet* at all, but to another play, which they will not have studied. What we do is have a look at how they can successfully structure short answers during the School Certificate. We do a lot of activities on imaginative texts inspired or based on *Romeo and Juliet*, but not on the actual text itself. So although it is a Shakespeare unit, we do a lot of things around it, and so it is quite loosely structured.

We don't look at any other drama texts aside from Shakespeare in Stage 5.

Poetry

In Year 9 last year there was no poetry unit, but we looked at some poetry as support texts in the Dystopian unit, as well as some protest songs, and we also used some poems as stimulus material for a creative writing unit. This year I will look at some romantic poetry to link in with *A Patch of Blue*, along with the film.

I don't like just watching films at the end of term so I usually teach some poetry in the last week or so as well. I haven't really selected anything yet but I would like to do some ballads with them, just because I think it is good for them to be exposed to these so they can become familiar with some advanced language and techniques.

Aside from the work I will do with my Year 10 class in Term 4 with the verse novel, we do a whole Poetry Unit in Term 3. The poetry unit is based on a study of Browning's poetry, and we look at several of her sonnets. The higher ability classes will probably look at them in much more detail than we will, but the texts we will be doing are the same. We have a booklet we all work from and every teacher decides which poems they want to teach to their own class. We are using some poems by an Australian poet Kate Llewellyn, and one is about a mother giving birth. There is an assessment task on this unit, and the girls have to write a speech in which they compare two of the poems. Generally what will happen is that each teacher will focus on a few individual poems so the girls are more familiar with them and can compare them more successfully. In my class aside from Browning we are doing some more modern poems. One that comes to mind is by Dorothy Hewitt, who writes about her convict ancestors which I quite like the sound of.

I am also looking at a poem by Bobby Sykes called *Miscegenation*, as a support text for *Looking for Alibrandi*. It is a poem that's closely linked to the search Alibrandi undertakes

for her father so I think it will really fit in well. Also this is an Aboriginal text and we need to look at some if we want to make sure we are following the Syllabus correctly.

Non-Fiction

The unit on Images of Women which we did in Year 9 last year still exists but it is in a different form. The focus is on *The Taming of the Shrew* this year, and so the eating disorders documentary and the film we watched called *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes* are not included this year. So there is no non-fiction planned for this year at all and I am aware of it being a Syllabus requirement. I will pass off the articles about blind people we will do in conjunction with *A Patch of Blue* as non-fiction, and tick the box for that particular Syllabus requirement.

For non-fiction in Year 10 we usually do something in conjunction with the unit on Social Issues Within a Text, so in this case related to *Alibrandi*. We look at a couple of newspaper articles and it's really nothing special. I think we pretend we have covered it. In reality I don't think we do cover non-fiction texts very well in this school, as we don't do biographies, or diaries, or documentaries. You see the top Year 10 classes manage to include quite a bit of non-fiction when they read *To Kill a Mockingbird* as they show several documentaries describing the era it is set in and racism in general. But the lower classes don't really get as much. With *Alibrandi* we look at migrant internment camps during the war, and it is interesting as there are several Italian girls in the class who have no idea what their grandfathers went through in that period of war.

Film

The changes in the program this year have really had a big impact in Year 9. Last year I taught *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, with *Saving Francesca* in the Individual and Conformity unit but this year I am keeping the film, but will probably teach it with *Uglies*,

even though I hate it, as the students always enjoy reading it and they manage to understand most of what we do with it in class.

We will also watch clips or scenes from the film *A Patch of Blue*, just to have a look at how the text is portrayed on the screen, and help the students engage with some of the harder parts of the text.

In Year 10 we are looking at *Footy Legends* and I selected it myself because I really love it. I think it isn't mainstream enough for all of them to have already seen it, which is always a big issue with films in general. Also we got quite a few Vietnamese kids in the class who know Ahn Do, and it is rated PG which is very important. The other classes do *Bend it Like Beckham*, but I don't like it, even though in some ways *Footy Legends* is maybe too masculine a film compared to *Bend it Like Beckham*, but Keira Knightley really doesn't do it for me. Also *Footy Legends* is an Australian film, and I think it's nice that we do it, and it complements the other Australian texts we do this year.

Every Day Texts

We do some newspaper articles connected with blindness for *A Patch of Blue* in Year 9, and in Year 10 as I said before we look at some articles dealing with WWII internment camps here in Australia.

6.8 Troy's Third Interview Part 1

6.8.1 Development of Initial Impressions, and General Selection Commentary

For Troy what is becoming increasingly important in his text selection criteria is the

concept of Literature as a distinctive feature of English teaching.

Literature is Literature and what isn't Literature isn't.

Troy admits that it is sometimes difficult to define what *Literature* is, and that it is not enough to simply justify a text as being canonical. For him

some things are worthwhile since they raise some kind of moral issue or moral construct which exists at both the conceptual and aesthetic level.

Troy believes that teachers have both the training and the obligation to select these texts themselves. However he thinks some teachers have difficulty with this since

as teachers we often do not see ourselves as experts in judging what we read and spend far too much time thinking about what the kids may enjoy reading. We stop and say things like: "oh they won't read X". Well I say give them "X" if you think it is something worth reading and find ways to get them to read it!

In this Troy is in agreement with Anna, believing that constantly pandering to the "engagement" needs of the students limits the selection of worthwhile texts. This is in contrast with Michael and David who believe student engagement to be at the forefront of their selection strategies. Troy justifies his dismissal of student engagement by stating:

The problem I find is that kids won't challenge themselves, they have no idea what is a good text, so we have to show them, or they get stuck at Harry Potter and Twilight all their lives. I think that kids need to be taught what is beautiful and worthwhile, so that they can make future choices based on worthwhile aesthetic standards. Alone they will make poor decisions at this age that will limit them and influence their relationship with texts and literature throughout their lives. This concept informs most of my teaching, and that is why I enjoy teaching. I would find it hard to sit there and teach what I think is an insignificant text; it would be unsatisfying. I can't engage in my work if it is like that. So even when I find myself teaching non-fiction or films that I haven't chosen I try and model what is worthwhile and valuable and what isn't. I make plain the idea that even though we are studying something, it may be only useful at the level

of skill building in school. It does not necessarily imply that it is a great text. I know it all sounds sanctimonious but for me it's true.

6.8.2 Changes in Teaching Context

In school D there had been significant changes occurring in the teaching context in the year the final interview was conducted. Troy highlights how these have had a profound impact on his own process of text selection, particularly with regards to his increased freedom.

We have had a head teacher – who I think was a hindrance to the faculty – leave, and already I can see a gradual shift in which the individual teacher will have a bigger say in the selection of texts for their own classroom.

As mentioned in Chapter 4.3 School D's text selection procedures had been heavily influenced by a series of external review board recommendations, and although Troy agrees "*with the idea of common assessments and marking criteria*" he also firmly states that

with text selection we need to trust teacher judgement...if teachers are forced into a certain position, their professional judgement is being undermined. Teachers need to be given some freedom.

Troy is quite satisfied with the changes taking place since they have resulted in an increased freedom in the selection of texts for his classroom, and he is finding that he has the freedom "*to test some ideas that were fixed in stone by the previous faculty head.*" Furthermore since he is the youngest member of staff and has over these last two or three years presented himself as someone wishing to push the boundaries, there is an interesting situation developing at School D where Troy in his own words is "*on the front lines and I'm told: 'ok, you test this and let us know how it goes'.*"

Lastly, similarly to Anna, Troy is also experiencing a new moment in his life-cycle as a teacher:

After six years teaching I find there have also been some changes in me. I'm not as energetic as I once was, but I still really enjoy teaching. I enjoy it because I get to look at and talk about things that I love, especially with my year 12 classes.

Interestingly, like Anna, Troy's remaining interest in teaching is closely linked to his senior classes as these seem to provide more professional and personal engagement and fulfilment.

6.9 Troy's Third Interview Part 2 – The Third Narrative of Selection

This year (2011) I am teaching only Year 9, and there have actually been quite a few changes at the school this year. The head teacher that we previously had, that I sometimes found very difficult to work with, in terms of trying new things, has gone. Now we have a new head teacher who is more willing to try out new things. I also take care of the Year 9 group, so I'm like the year co-ordinator/advisor and so I have much more of a say in their English class as well. I've pretty much been given carte blanche to do whatever I like with them. So we streamed a top group, not necessarily the total top group in the sense that we had some students that we thought were under-achievers, who we had an inkling could be actually quite good at English if they were given a chance. So I fought to include them. Anyway I have a Year 9 class this year that is meant to be quite advanced, at least on paper.

Reflections on all Texts Taught Last Year (2010) and Texts Being Taught This Year (2011)

Novels / Creative Writing / Fiction

In 2009 and 2010 I taught Year 10 *The Great Gatsby*. In 2009 I had a really great class, and I thought it would work. In fact it worked very well and got most of the kids involved and they are the Year 12 I have this year and I can see it actually had a profound effect on them and it's a text that they can use as a point of reference now that they are doing their HSC. It's a good tool in their toolbox. In 2010 instead the group I had was nowhere near as gifted, and I felt I had unfortunately in a sense convinced the rest of the staff the previous year of *Gatsby's* usefulness so they all wanted to do it without really assessing the various ability levels of the classes. That was problematic and at least for my class it didn't work as well as I wanted. The students didn't get as much out of it as I had hoped this time round. It wasn't the same, and I think for that class *The Catcher in the Rye* would've worked better, especially for some of the kids who didn't engage with *Gatsby* at all. And when that happens, it's a tragedy in a sense, as it is a waste of time for them, a missed opportunity. At least that's what I think and I feel pretty strongly about it.

The last two years with Year 9 I taught *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In 2009 it was connected with *The Gathering* by Carmody, and in 2010 they did it with a non-fiction text selected by the students individually, usually an autobiography of some sort. Both times it was done as a bildungsroman unit where we looked at the coming of age text. This year we are thinking of doing it again. *Mockingbird* as a coming of age text works really well, and we look at it in theory as a genre study, but to do that we really should look at more texts so we can compare them. So in the end we don't really do it as a genre study but as a concept study of the coming of age journey personified by Scout. Again they will look at self-selected biographies, for example the Ahn Do one is quite good and relevant to the students I have

and has some pretty interesting and funny parts. He is a refugee from South East Asia, but it's not that kind of patronising dribble that you usually get with stuff like this and has quite a bit of sophistication. So I've nudged some kids in that direction, looking at some young people's autobiographies. Some students choose Dahl's one, *Boy* but kids don't really get him anymore so it doesn't work. They write an essay for assessment with this unit.

The experience I had with this text in these last few years has shown me that the kids enjoy it quite a bit, even if there are some problems with some of them getting all of it, particularly with some of the idioms of the time. Also it needs a lot of background work exploring the Civil Rights problems in the United States as they do not generally know about that sort of thing. I do that using YouTube and showing them different clips and it works quite well and builds up their interest in the story even before we've started reading. Also when we look at the background of the book, they love the mystery of the person who wrote the book, and her relationship with Capote and his story as well. I use all this to suck them into the novel a little bit you know. It works like that, as the trivia relating to the novel is actually really interesting and kids love it. Plus with their laptops, we have access to a lot of things to supplement the text, and particularly with *Mockingbird* there is stuff about it everywhere, and this makes it accessible as well. It makes them also look at the non-fiction text with more interest as they have seen that some non-fiction stuff (like Lee and Capote) is actually more interesting than fiction sometimes.

With Year 9 last year we looked at some short stories by Tim Winton, and there was a focus on creative writing so it was more a production unit than an appreciation one. I always think that the smaller nature of the short stories can allow us teachers to really select a variety of texts that highlight great writing in many different genres and forms. I think that we need to show the students what good writing is if we expect them to produce it themselves, and short stories are a great tool since they can be read and looked at over a

couple of lessons, if not a single one. Having said this, last year we spent far too much time on them, especially on writing since the students want to share what they've written with the class and so it took too long. Also they understood that we wanted them to write and so they got bored of reading the stories they were presented with and wanted class time to have the opportunity to write, and so we lost some of them. A good story that the kids love is one called *Listen to the End* by Tony Hunter, and they all think it's great. It's this story of this girl who is home alone, and it seems like there is someone in the house who is going to kill her, and it ends with her on the phone hanging up and closing the door and you're not sure if she was murdered or not, and the kids think it's the greatest story of all time. What I do with it I look at three different critics assessing it in different ways and the students are able to see it for what it is: an overly written cliché. We also looked at more complex stories, like *Those Who Walk Away* by Ursula Le Guin which is used a lot for philosophy as well and the kids really enjoy talking about what they would do in that same scenario and how it relates to their world and what that actually is. They are the kind of allegories that they are going to write. The Tim Winton stuff is good but it's not what they need for the future. I want them to learn to write something that has some layers and subtext to it.

Drama

With Year 10 last year and the year before and every year we do *Macbeth* as drama and it always works. Last year I said I wanted to do *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and leave the Text and Context unit, but since I'm not teaching Year 10 this year I didn't fight for it, as we need to choose our battles. But in the future I would like to do it, and connect it to *Hamlet* as a supplementary text, and I think that if we continue with the streaming of classes it would work really well.

In Year 9 we always do *Romeo and Juliet*, and this year was no exception. It usually works, and is accessible on three or four levels. For example I can present it as a political

play, or looking at its social structures, or as a gendered play, or even just looking at the ideas of love and eternity and all that jazz, like the criticism of youth. I find that the kids love all that and really get involved, and the text comes alive when they see that the playwright has a purpose. Last year's class liked to see the impurity of the love, they saw Romeo as this dirty eighteen year-old trying to have it off with a fourteen year-old, and they get all that. So there are many different reasons it works and one that really has begun to strike me as important this last year is that a lot of our students can relate to the concept of a forbidden angle of the relationship because of some of their cultures. The play is really universal and everyone has a version of it in their own tradition in one form or another.

Last year I did it with the Luhrmann version of the film and in a shorter time. This year I am doing it on its own as a critical study, and again they will write an essay which I know is not necessarily a great assessment, but that's how we do things. Last year my class was a standard class while this year I have as I said a streamed class and so I think I can really work some of the more difficult angles with them. I didn't waste a lot of time setting it up. We briefly looked at their expectations (which I love doing as they get obliterated by the end of the play and the kids realise it), but I really just hit them with Shakespeare from day one. We psychoanalysed the characters, looked at the role of gender in the character construction, extracted the values and tried to apply them to their own contemporary world, and it worked. I am proud to say that with this multi-layered approach I won the class totally over. They especially like the political issues we looked at and they compared them to some of the other classes and found that their peers had done it more superficially and hadn't actually liked it. So although the text didn't change from last year, my approach to it changed completely: Firstly because I didn't want to do Luhrmann, and secondly because of the higher ability level of my class. The assessment in fact will be pretty open ended and I have fairly high hopes for them.

Poetry

In 2010 with my Year 10 class we looked at Australian Ballads and Odes and I felt it hadn't really worked, but neither had what we did the previous year, so I'm not really sure what we should do. I mean in a certain sense it did work. If I present my students with poetry, they will read it, they will analyse it, and they will look at its various parts and do all the work and assessment I present them with. It is an accessible text for the students but to me it's like the complexities of the concepts explored really aren't there, and they are too basic for students who are moving onto Year 11. And it also didn't work as we had initially intended it to. The whole point was to prepare the students for the difficult poetry they were to experience in Year 11, particularly with T.S. Eliot, but the truth is that the type of poetry we did, and how we looked at it didn't really do much at all. So it's a strange situation, don't get me wrong, the unit was fine, but I would still like to change it, as I don't really get the obsession with the Australian poetry thing. I mean we could do the bush poetry in Year 7 as it's ok for the junior years, to introduce poetic techniques in simple images. For Year 10 the most interesting part was when we spoke of the fictionalised ideas of what Australia is according to that type of poetry, where Australians are presented as rural white people. In fact I was quite cynical, playing the devil's advocate and almost criticising the fact that we even teach it. I asked them why they thought we were looking at that poetry, and the kids criticised that aspect of Australian culture and identity that alienates kids from other cultural backgrounds. That was interesting, but it was sort of improvised and not really part of the unit.

The last two years we taught no poetry in Year 9, even though it is a blatant breach of Syllabus requirements, and it is strange since everything we do in the faculty tries to keep very close to the syllabus (in theory) especially since we had that faculty review from the Board of Study several years ago that I spoke of in a previous interview. But the review

looked at assessment, and student equity, but never at the actual selection process so it gave the teachers a sense that it is not an important aspect of their craft; I think it is central to what we do. They put assessment and marking criteria on a pedestal and allowed the teachers to ignore their selection criteria. This is really obvious in our selection of poetry or our non-selection of it. We need to do much more poetry than we do across the Stages.

This year with the Year 9 we had free reign to choose poems to form an anthology for our own class. I'm thinking of doing just a couple of poems, and not focus on them writing poems at all. They can do that in another instance, so I can focus on appreciation rather than production. The kids like writing poetry, but it's mostly garbage and gives them the wrong idea about what poetry actually is. The poetry I want to do is about significant complex relationships, like *Ode to a Nightingale*. These are hard poems; they are complex poems from the Romantics. They can be challenging, but I think I have a good group and I'd like to challenge them with that. An argument I have with my fellow teachers is that they focus too much on the pragmatic aspect of teaching poetry so that the students will be ready for it in Stage 6. I can't work like that, and if I had to I would hate it. That way of teaching makes me sick. I want to look at Coleridge and Keats with my Year 9 students not just because it will be good for them in year 12, but because I think the students need to be exposed to it. Looking back, in many ways it's the stuff I wish I had been taught when I was at school in Year 9, instead of reading it myself when I was 17-18. I think it's valuable to have someone introduce these poems to the students, especially someone who has a passion, an affection for these poems. It has a stronger impact on the kids.

In general terms we expect a lot from our kids, we set the bar really high, and we aim for band sixes in Year 12. Also we actually get students who write poetry for Extension 2 and if all they've been exposed to is Banjo Patterson then all they will do is try and emulate him and it's trash. So the poems I selected I did because of this ever stronger belief I have in

the canon. I am we can say a bit counterculture as I think we need to clearly define Literature and separate it from the other things we study, such as Language and Literacy. Literature is beautiful and does something other things don't do. I refuse to be hijacked by postmodern dribble about the value of the Acrostic Poem. I think we need to teach them legitimate literature, and I think these poems are really worthwhile literature, that's all. This legitimacy doesn't just derive from what I can do in the class with it. True it introduces them to a style of writing and a form of language that is aspirational, and I do think that for many kids it is enlightening, but the strongest justification I can give for these poems is their beauty, and it is their beauty that opens kids' eyes. You can see this with other texts as well, like *Romeo and Juliet* in Year 9 and *1984* in Year 11 and T.S. Eliot. These texts unlock something in the students, and I want to start doing that early on and not waste time with shape poems. I want them to have that moment where they realise what English truly is, and fall in love with it.

Non-Fiction

In Year 10 two years ago we claimed *Frontline* as our non-fiction unit, justifying it by saying we were looking at the role of media in society. We have now gotten rid of that unit as it really was an untenable position we were defending, particularly in the face of Syllabus requirements. We had planned to teach it last year as well as you probably remember from our last interview, but we didn't actually end up teaching it. A few of us stood up and said we didn't want to teach it. I mean I actually quite like *Frontline*, but I think it is not only not non-fiction, but not necessarily relevant for the kids today. So what we did was we showed them clips of the *Gruen Transfer* which is this show about advertising, which aside from its own merits is a better version of non-fiction to begin with. Personally I don't like it excessively. It's ok, but it has Will Anderson in it who I don't love, but it did work much better. Anyway, we did it post School Certificate, and it wasn't assessed in any way, so it was

really just a unit where we tried to keep the students engaged for a little bit more time before the end of the school year, and give them a taste of Representations and Texts.

Non-fiction is challenging to teach because it's not fiction. With Year 9 in previous years we did *Australia's Next Top Model* and last year we added *Football Superstar* to the mix. Since as I said I am the year advisor I've been allowed to do what I want with it, so while everyone else is doing that Reality TV unit I'm going to do something else, as I think it is outmoded and only engages the students briefly. I find that it is far too long for a 9 week unit, and it gets pretty dry towards the end. So I'm going to look at some mockumentaries and analyse the text and representation of meaning within the text and the way that you can actually convince and persuade people through the film medium. We are looking at *Bowling for Columbine* which is real non-fiction for once and is very emotive, and then we will compare it with *Thank You for Smoking* and some clips from *We Can be Heroes*, which the students really engage with. The whole point of the unit is to look at the role of the filmmaker in creating and portraying meaning, and the devices he uses to persuade. And I hate to say this, but it is Module C in Advanced English in the HSC, but even though I am aware of that, this is not the reason I am doing it. Also I'm thinking of getting the kids to make their own short mockumentary, as I would like to focus on the concept of satire and finding something that's worth satirising. Plus with their laptops they all have access to video editing software so that's really easy. In fact we tried that sort of thing with the Reality TV unit in the past and it worked well. It would be cool to see them send up a day at school, or even just my classroom.

For non-fiction the students also look at a biography with *Mockingbird* as I mentioned already.

Film

The plan for Year 10 last year was to do Polanski's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* in concomitance with *Macbeth*. And it was actually a massive debate in the staffroom on how we should do this. It was for a unit on Text and Context, so in my opinion you have to show an appropriation of the text, and not something like Polanski where it is a simple, traditional representation of *Macbeth*. It has a bit of experimentation, but it doesn't really add anything to the text we read in class, while the Kurosawa was completely different. It allowed us to talk about specific eastern value structures, and we could do the whole post-war east versus the medieval west thing with the two texts. But in the end we did it only with Polanski and didn't look at *Throne of Blood* at all. Perhaps this year we are proposing to do *Macbeth* as a unit on Power and so look at the film as only a re-enforcement of what they have read.

In Year 9 this year we have the films I listed in the non-fiction texts, as we didn't do any films connected with Shakespeare in Year 9 since I didn't want to do Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* again.

Every Day Texts

I've spoken of the difficulty I have with these types of texts before. I like to inform concepts with them, in connection with other texts we are studying. They are only support texts and do not warrant much analysis or work on them specifically. I make reference to popular culture, to the news, The Simpsons, Justin Bieber, etc... It doesn't really matter as long as it has the function of engaging the kids and clarifying a concept.

6.10 Comment on Third Interview

The third interview was crucial in helping to create the four narratives of selection, as not only did it extend the research data into the third year of teaching practice, but provided the opportunity to reflect back on the selection experience as a whole. The teachers encountered during the third interview were very different from the teachers met during the first interview over twelve months before. They were teachers more fully aware of the implications and importance of their process of selection for their own classrooms, and as a subject as a whole. The growing confidence in their personal theories, the developing awareness of their shortcomings, and the conscious will to continually improve on their selection criteria were evident. Thus the open discussions following the end of the more formal interview questions of the third and final interview were an intended way to finish the interview sessions and close the narratives using the authentic voices of four teachers more fully aware of the importance of the topic at hand and therefore much clearer in their final responses.

Figure 6.1 below summarizes each teacher's adopted positions with regards to the Cox Models (1989), Marshall's Descriptions (2000) and Protherough's selection strategies (1983) examined and commented on in detail in the three narratives presented in the previous three chapters.

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Cox</u>	<u>Marshall</u>	<u>Protherough</u>
<u>Michael</u>	Personal Growth	Liberal/ Old Grammarian	Awareness of Children's Tastes Matching the Book and the Children Literary Judgements
<u>David</u>	Personal Growth	Liberal/ Old Grammarian	Awareness of Children's Taste Matching the Book and the Children Curricular Principals
<u>Anna</u>	Cultural Heritage	Old Grammarian/	Matching the Book and the Children

		Critical Dissenter	Curricular Principals Literary Judgements
<u>Troy</u>	Cultural Heritage/ Personal Growth	Liberal/ Old Grammarian	Curricular Principles Literary Judgements

Figure 6.1 – Summary of Teacher's Position with Regards to Cox, Marshall and Protherough

The following and concluding chapter will bring together the results outlined in the previous chapters achieving a cohesive conclusion stemming from the comparison of these results.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

This thesis began by asking a question in two parts: how and why do teachers select texts for their English classrooms? The focus was on Stage 5 NSW English and took shape through a series of interviews with four teachers over a two year period examining a three year teaching cycle.

This chapter will bring together the three narratives and highlight the most influential factors contributing to the four teachers' selection strategies. It will begin by summarising the impact the research process had on the teachers themselves.

7.1 Impact of the Research on Participants

The methodology used was aimed at collecting detailed data from the participants in a manner that was beneficial to them as educators. Reflecting on and questioning their classroom practices empowered them to take further active control of their professional lives: qualitative research seeks to empower the people who choose to participate (Vesper and Brock, 1991; Wolcott, 1994). This can be seen in David's final unsolicited reflection at the end of the third interview session, where he stated:

It's been a pleasure to do this, and one of the benefits I got out of this is that all the questions you've asked me help me to start articulating to myself what I'm doing, and why I'm doing it. So it's been very beneficial for me.

Anna also sees value in the interview process, both at the professional and personal level:

I have been thinking about these interviews and your thesis topic these last few months, and initially I remember thinking it was a really small

topic, maybe too focused. Instead now I can really see that the decisions that we teachers make about our texts reflect so much our own perceptions of our professional identity as teachers. I see that the decisions I make about a text are the main decisions I have in terms of my own autonomy, which determine the conditions of my teaching life, particularly as an English teacher. I think it is an important topic. Also I enjoyed the interview today especially as it is the first conversation I've had all day. I haven't actually spoken to anyone today except to tell them off so it's been good.

And Troy echoes both of them when he states:

This interview process has been quite useful and constructive for me as we rarely get the time or the opportunity to talk things like this through and reflect on what we do. There is a sense of accountability to these interviews, where I have had to justify what I do and I've found that it is not always so easy. But the interviews have helped me crystallise the ideas I was implicitly working with and make them explicit. It has also given me the opportunity to think about what might happen, and what I could achieve in the future.

After each interview, I found myself (maybe even weeks later) thinking about our conversation and the concepts that have arisen, and I manage to bring them up with the faculty and I find that many of us hadn't really thought a lot of the things we spoke about through. It has been a beneficial process, and I think that slowly because of this process I was also able to verbalise some of the proposed changes I wanted to do within my faculty, and this has resulted I think in positive change.

The interviews helped David *articulate* and Troy *crystallize* their selection decisions, which Anna recognised as defining her professional teaching identity. This ongoing reflection on their craft benefitted them both at the level of future text selection but more importantly in their more general professional lives.

The above quotes stand out as important with regards to future research on the role that reflective practice plays on teachers' professional development. This is particularly poignant for the two early career teachers who not only indicated how beneficial this possibility to reflect on their craft was during the interview sessions, but acknowledged the fact that participating in the research encouraged them to continue this reflection on their work between and after the interviews. This allowed them to begin questioning their beliefs and values, and examine their underlying assumptions about what their role as English teachers is.

7.2 Factors Guiding the Selection of Texts for NSW Stage 5 English

7.2.1 Most Prominent Models of English

Although all the participants displayed a certain degree of flexibility of movement within their chosen points of view, and applied an active "intelligent and intellectualised eclecticism" (Sawyer and McFarlane, 2000, p.25) balancing various teaching models, the twelve individual interviews highlighted the importance the teachers' own literary and pedagogical frameworks play on the selection of texts.

The findings of Goodwyn (1992), Hardman and Williamson (1993), and Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) present a clear representation of the influence specific models of English have on teaching. Of the Five Models described by Cox (1989) – and recognised as functionally relevant in this thesis – previous research highlighted the almost complete predominance of the Personal Growth model, with the Cultural Analysis model following closely behind. It also described the rapidly decreasing value attributed to the Cultural Heritage model which was considered below both the Adult Needs and Cross-Curricular

models. Interestingly although the interviews have in some ways confirmed these results, they have also turned these on their heads in some remarkable ways.

The two senior teacher participants – Michael and David – mirror the findings of previous research as their foundational model of English gravitates towards the Personal Growth model. For Michael it's never about *"language development, but personal development"* which allows the students to reflect on the human experience. For David it's always about making *"that real-world connection with the text"* creating that continuity between the students' lives and classroom experiences. For Michael a text that is *"worth doing"* is one that impacts on the way students interpret the world around them. For David *"what works"* are texts that respond to his students' growing and maturing needs and allows him to tell them that they are *"worth thinking about"* because that is where they are now.

The two more junior teacher participants – Anna and Troy – instead tend to contrast with previous research findings as they base their selection strategies (and their teaching approach) on a distinctly Cultural Heritage model of English. Anna's stance developed as a form of resistance to the Growth inspired Syllabus she was working under. For Troy it is not so much an opposition to the Growth model but a particular dislike for the types of texts the model tends to focus on. For Anna literature has *"a capital 'L'"* and she fears that often in Stage 5 teachers inculcate a *"wrong sense of what literature is"*. For Troy *"some texts have an inherent value"* which is not only recognised as a form of cultural knowledge but recognisable, allowing students to access higher level concepts about the human condition. For Anna student engagement cannot be the ultimate benchmark since students need to learn the difference between enjoyment and appreciation. For Troy there is *"a clear distinction between Literature and everything else we study in English"* and this difference needs to be taught to the students who cannot necessarily at this point recognise what is aesthetically beautiful on their own.

Nevertheless the intelligent eclecticism highlighted above is present in all four of the teacher participants. All four make use of other models of English particularly in their selection strategies, including the Cultural Analysis and Adult Needs models. Michael's focus on breaking down the construction of meaning in *Bowling for Columbine*, and Troy's actions in going against the grain in his *Reality TV* units have both teachers comfortably utilizing the Cultural Analysis model. In the same way David's use of *Puberty Blues* in developing advanced writing skills and Anna's political analyses of dystopian novels has them both making use of the Adult Needs model.

What comes through in the narratives is teachers being aware of a variety of Teaching and Literary models of English. All four teachers structure their selection strategies around a core model of English which although easily identifiable is by no means so easily definable. Each teacher's foundational model differs from the others in the way and at the level in which it includes and is interspersed by other functionally relevant models. This eclecticism forms distinct amalgamated models within which each teacher functions and selects texts.

7.2.2 Main Factors Influencing and Limiting the Selection of Texts

The teacher narratives highlight the fact that the factors influencing the teachers' selection of texts are easily subdivisible into two distinct categories: *limiting* factors and *guiding* factors. This distinction is important as the teachers' decision-making process involves a constant friction between these two varieties of factors. It is in understanding this interaction and the techniques teachers use to balance their personal value judgements against selection constraints beyond their control that their decisions come into focus more clearly.

The most significant limiting and guiding factors are summarised in Table 7.1 below:

Limiting	Guiding
Faculty Policy	Personal Knowledge of a Text
School Tradition	Personal Taste
School Canon	Class Ability
Availability	Literary Canon
School and Parent Censorship	

Table 7.1 Limiting and Guiding Factors

7.2.3 Limiting Factors

For the four teachers interviewed the external limiting factors are quite clear. Interestingly the five most limiting factors the teachers agreed on are all school-based factors and not Government enforced ones: David sees the *Syllabus* as a guiding factor, while the remaining three teachers dismiss it as almost uninfluential; external testing (such as NAPLAN) is seen as a burden they could do without by Troy and Anna but is ignored by David and Michael; and Troy is the only teacher who sees the HSC exams as limiting his Stage 5 choices and even he admits this has more to do with *School Tradition* and *Faculty Policy* than with restrictive external examinations.

Faculty Policy, School Tradition, and School Canon

Anna, Michael and Troy see *Faculty Policy* and *School Tradition* as the two most limiting factors in their selection processes. Troy extends this line of thought by adding the unavoidable *School Canon* – which is a natural consequence of the aforementioned factors – to the list. How do these factors limit these teachers' decision-making process? Teaching experience and intra-school hierarchies seem to influence this.

Anna and Troy as beginning teachers were limited in their selection by the more experienced and more influential staff members and their pre-established programs. It was only in the last narrative that their voices were beginning to be heard and opinions taken into consideration as they began to diverge from the *School Canon* and more actively contrast *School Tradition* and *Faculty Policy*.

As the English head-teacher with almost twenty years of teaching experience, one would think that Michael would be above *Faculty Policy* both in terms of career level and hierarchy positioning. However, the very strong sense of *School Tradition* present in School A limited his decision-making significantly. This limitation was evident in both his role as head-teacher in guiding and organizing the school English programs, but also in his own classroom text selections, with the concept of “choosing one’s battles” often central in his selection strategies.

David as the other experienced teacher in the sample however did not feel limited by his *Faculty Policy*, but rather guided by the knowledge that he was working in a faculty which presented a cohesive view of what subject English should be. This conscientious and reflexive viewpoint was undoubtedly assisted by the actual high level of professional freedom David enjoys within his faculty which allows him to diverge significantly from set texts and *School Tradition*. Having taught in School B for many years, he feels a sense of ownership of both *School Tradition* and *Faculty Policy* as he has helped shape both. This sense of ownership contrasts with Troy’s and Anna’s experiences as early career teachers and with Michael’s who had just started working in School A and had inherited a well established and militant *Policy* and *Tradition*.

Availability

All four teachers irrespective of teaching experience found text *Availability* to be a determining and limiting factor in their selection process. For Troy this was closely connected to School D being a Public school with a limited budget, but was further worsened by the *Faculty Policy* of teaching whole-form texts since replacing or buying a complete set of texts requires a significant investment of the faculty budget. This situation – also described by the other three teachers – limits new texts being introduced and accentuates the formation and consolidation of a *School Canon* of texts. This limit is especially evident in the selection of longer texts such as novels and drama texts, particularly with regards to the established Shakespeare plays.

School and Parent Censorship

Censorship of texts, particularly parental censorship is a limiting factor three of the teachers felt impacted quite significantly on their freedom of selection. Once again as with the majority of limiting factors mentioned above the level of teacher experience plays an enormous role in defining the impact censorship has.

For David censorship is a non-issue. His faculty does not censor his selections, and his texts are never controversial enough to warrant parental involvement. Michael – as the other experienced teacher – acknowledges the impact parental censorship can have, but after many years of teaching has come to the conclusion that it is one limiting factor that he has the ability and power to ignore. He recognises the impossibility of pleasing everyone; Subject English is more than just the study of language, it is the central educative and formative subject thus making controversies unavoidable. Nevertheless Michael does not enjoy the extra paperwork, communication and permission letters that go hand-in-hand with these controversies. This extra work sometimes dissuades him from selecting certain

texts even though he believes that the only texts worth doing are those "*that make the students sit up and take notice*".

The two early-career teachers' experiences are significantly different. Anna avoids possible censorship situations completely. She has become increasingly aware of the difficulties arising from *Parental Censorship*, parental involvement and complaints in her last two years of teaching. This has led her to move away from controversial texts since the possible situations arising from these weigh on her already busy schedule. For Troy, School D's policies limit his selections, particularly with regards to some religious minorities present in the school who are quite vocal in their censorship of texts. Similarly to Anna this has resulted in his steering clear of controversial texts so as to avoid the uncomfortable situations which may arise.

What texts attract the most censorship? Both Michael and Troy indicate that films are the types of texts that arouse the most parental involvement. This is particularly the case with films with violent scenes or scenes with partial nudity, ranging from Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* to *American History X*.

In Chapter 1.5.1 the rationale for selecting teachers from varying teaching contexts was examined with particular reference made towards understanding the role religious beliefs and diocesan censorship might have on CEO and Independent Catholic Schools. Interestingly both Anna in School C and Michael in School A do not believe the Catholic ethos of the school actively limits their selection of texts. In fact both indicate *Parental Censorship* as the main limiting agent. It is only in School C (NSW selective public school) that Troy describes a situation in which it is school policy itself that censors his selections.

What is apparent in the interviews is that although more experienced teachers tend to have a greater level of autonomy in their text selection, and that faculty policy can limit selection, as a general rule the issues of power relations and intra-faculty conflict were not

acknowledged or identified as problematic for teachers, and a non-issue with regards to the impact on text selection.

7.2.4 Guiding Factors

The teacher narratives highlight four main guiding factors influencing the participants in their selection of texts. These factors differ from those listed in Chapter 7.2.3 as they are not external factors limiting teacher decision; they are the factors the teachers actively use to guide their selections. They are not factors the teachers endure and withstand – sometimes passively – but factors the teachers actively engage with.

Of the four guiding factors, *Personal Knowledge of a Text* and *Personal Taste* will be examined together as they are factors which guide all four participants. In contrast, *Class Ability* and the *Literary Canon* once again highlight the differences between the more experienced teachers and the early-career teachers' experiences.

Personal Knowledge of a Text and Personal Taste

Personal Knowledge of a Text is a crucial guiding factor in the participant teachers' selection strategies and in the majority of cases it is closely connected with the teachers' own *Personal Taste*.

Michael links *knowing* a text to *caring about* the text and it is this combination of *knowledge* and *taste* that allows him to interact with the text at a higher level with his students. That is why restrictive *Faculty Policies* appear to be detrimental to the selection of texts, as they limit one of the fundamental aspects of the teachers' own decision-making process. David refuses to teach texts he doesn't know as he sees the textual and contextual knowledge a teacher brings to the class as invaluable and an essential part of the teacher-

learner interaction. For David *Personal Taste* guides his selection of texts for thematic units, as he aims for life-impacting texts with a particular focus on personal and emotional growth.

For Anna *Personal Taste* is paramount in her selection as she can't contemplate teaching something she doesn't like or value. *Personal Knowledge* has become more important in her last years of teaching as she has found a series of texts she is most comfortable with which she enjoys teaching more often. Troy doesn't enjoy teaching texts he doesn't know and finds it easier to teach texts he is familiar with, and although he believes he doesn't need to teach texts he personally values his actual selections contradict this view.

At times the participants' approach to justifying selection on *Personal Taste* and *Knowledge of a Text* was problematic. Teacher comfort with a text was often described as making it *easier*. The implications here need to be examined. The teachers obviously intended this description of a text as being *easier* to teach. But should this *easiness* be a driving factor behind selection? Should a teacher's own limited curriculum knowledge and circumscribed textual and literary awareness impact so heavily on students' experience of literature? These questions become even more important when assessing the impact of *Class Ability* (examined in the next section), since teacher selection based on *easier* to teach texts, in which the *ease* is so closely linked to *my passion/my enjoyment* of a specific text seems to be quite distant from a logical assessment of individual *Class Ability* based on pedagogy and experience.

Class Ability Vs the Literary Canon

Class Ability and the *Literary Canon* are two guiding factors which seem to polarize the participant teachers' opinions. These differing outlooks are closely intertwined with the teachers' adopted and professed Models of English examined in Chapter 7.2.1.

Michael and David see engagement as the central tenet of their selection strategy; without student engagement there can be no growth. Therefore they select texts aimed at their particular class ability level. Once again this highlights the problem with restrictive *Faculty Policies* which limit teachers' own assessment of the needs of their class based on ability levels; only by pitching a text at the right level can engagement occur. David – who is less limited by his *Faculty Policy* – appreciates how in his school there is enough flexibility to allow him to cater for varying ability levels.

Anna and Troy's views regarding both *Class Ability* and student engagement differ from those of their more experienced colleagues. They do recognize the importance of *Class Ability* but worry that the focus on achieving student engagement often – in their opinion – happens at the expense of other more important aspects of selection: Literature and the *Literary Canon*. Their foundational Model of English brings them to recognize particular inherent qualities - aesthetic and moral - that are to be found in the *Literary Canon*. For Troy this value judgement is unwavering, and – particularly for longer texts such as novels – at the very core of his selection strategy. Nevertheless Troy believes School D undervalues the importance of *Class Ability* in its structuring whole year-group reading texts. Although the canon is also a fundamental aspect of Anna's decision-making process, the importance of *Class Ability* has begun to surface in the last two years since some students “*just need 100-page books.*”

Michael and David see *Class Ability* as a central factor guiding their text selection process, as it impacts heavily on student engagement with the text, which they consider to be a crucial goal of their selection strategies. In contrast, although Anna and Troy also see the importance of assessing and acknowledging *Student Ability*, student engagement itself is not their final aim. Their goal is to present students with higher order texts in order to

educate them towards an aesthetic appreciation of what they – and the historical *makers* of the canon – deem to be worthwhile *Literature*.

Of particular note however is the fact that none of the participant teachers, across all interviews, attempted in any way to problematize the word *Class* in *Class Ability*. Teachers do not teach students in a one-on-one context, but rather teach large classes, which even when streamed for ability must necessarily be composed of students with varying ability levels and differing needs. Although *Class Ability* was recognised by all as a significant guiding factor in the selection of texts, the concept of individual student abilities and needs was never truly addressed. In assessing the suitability of a text, the teachers seemed to be working under the assumption of a certain sense of homogeneity of student abilities within their Stage 5 English classrooms. In practice the teachers are working under the notion that *one text size fits all*.

Although this notion may be in a certain sense justifiable in School D where Troy is working in a selective school context, it cannot be defended in the other three schools which are often characterized by the teachers themselves as being the complete opposite of homogenous in the ability levels of the students. The Literature Review in this thesis has already established the importance the text itself has on the learning environment, thus accentuating the importance of the selection process. Nevertheless the researcher acknowledges that this is only half of the equation; how the text is presented and how it is taught is just as critical. Therefore, given that these two moments – selection and instruction – are mutually important, the idea that only one of the two should be differentiated in practice so as to accommodate student needs and ability levels is educationally and pedagogically speaking uncomfortable. Differentiation of selections – although difficult – needs to be addressed at all levels. The issue of differentiation of text selection and instruction is one that needs to be addressed in further research as the teacher participants

appear to be – both in words and in practice – unaware of the extent of their underlying assumptions, beliefs and values with regards to this issue. Although this was beyond the scope of the present research, what is most interesting with regards to this topic is the idea that the teachers interviewed were active and aware of the role the selection of the text played in their students’ learning, but did not significantly address the issue of differentiating instruction.

7.3 Final Statements

This thesis’ investigation of the factors guiding and influencing the text selection strategies of four NSW Stage 5 English teachers has provided a meaningful insight into this crucial aspect of teachers’ craft practice. The twelve teacher narratives highlight that behind the teachers’ personal guiding values, and governing the teachers’ very interactions with their own schools’ limiting practices is their adoption of a particular central Model of English which permeates their teaching. What is wonderfully apparent however is the fulfilment of the oft-mentioned “intelligent and intellectualised eclecticism” (Sawyer and McFarlane, 2000, p.25) which allows the participant teachers to adapt, change and sometimes abandon their established and recognizable central theoretical models when confronted by the real world practicalities of class ability, school tradition, faculty policy, parent censorship, and availability. It is this flexibility displayed by the four teachers which enables them to select the right text at the right time.

The implications of these findings for teacher training and professional development are multifaceted. The acknowledgement that teachers make constructive use of a variety of theoretical models in justifying their approach to student learning and teaching pedagogy brings us to assess the role of university faculties and their adoption of limited literary paradigms. Does the focus on training for teaching pedagogies and strategies, and Syllabus

interpretation limit future teachers' introduction to the vast array of literary paradigms available to them? Should English teachers' later professional development include more training in literary theory so as to allow them to achieve the flexibility in approach to literature needed to successfully engage students with all types of texts?

7.3.1 Recommendations for Future Research

In the process of answering the thesis' driving questions, the data collected and the analysis conducted generated a further series of questions, queries and future research possibilities beyond the simple *repeat research using a larger sample size* response. The possibilities of future research when discussing teacher decision-making and teacher practice are numerous, and multifaceted. Below an attempt was made to select the most poignant of these.

The teacher narratives highlighted the problematic tendency of the teachers to either leave out programmed texts and certain types of texts altogether in their teaching. This repeated narrowing and Syllabus reinterpretation, in which both Syllabus and Faculty curriculum requirements were ignored, is an interesting future avenue for extended research. This curriculum contraction and reduction has serious implications, and understanding what this means for the development of students' knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly with regards to the mandated learning outcomes is an important questions that needs to be answered, particularly in these first years of the Australian Curriculum.

The thesis has highlighted the eclectic nature of English teachers' use of theoretical models in their teaching and text selection strategies. As mentioned in section 7.2.1, each teacher's approach can be more easily defined through a more thorough understanding of how it interacts with, includes and is interspersed by the variety of teaching models he or

she is extrapolating functionally relevant, real-world classroom applications from. Future research aimed at discerning the continuing relevance of both Cox's *Models* and Marshall's *Descriptions*, and at establishing how these work together in aiding English teachers define their teaching approach within the context of the Australian Curriculum will be both beneficial in the short term, and provide a basis for ongoing research in the field.

When presenting the reality of the research's limited perspective in Chapter 3.7.1, the author acknowledged the fact that the narratives focus on the lived experiences of the four teachers exclusively. Further research delving into the difference and distance between the teachers' intended pedagogic outcomes, and the real classroom experiences described by students would add a richness of multiple perspectives allowing a greater understanding of the roles teacher reflection, decision-making and adoption of particular theoretical frameworks play on actual student lived classroom experiences.

Bibliography

Abbs, P. (1991). Defining the aesthetic field. In R. Alexander and A. Simpson (Eds.), *Aesthetics and Arts Education*. Ithaca: Illinois University Press.

Alloway, N. and Gilbert, P. (1997). Boys and literacy: Lessons from Australia. *Gender and Education*, 9(1), 49-58.

Alvermann, D. E., Young, J. P. Green, C. and Wisenbaker, J. M. (1999). Adolescents' perceptions and negotiations of literacy practices in after-school read and talk clubs. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(2), 221-264.

Anders, P.L., Hoffman, J. V., and Duffy, G. G. (2000). "Teaching teachers to teach reading: Paradigm shifts, persistent problems, and challenges". In M. L. Kamil, P.B. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, and R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. III, pp.719-742). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Anderson, M. (2002). *Journeys in teacher professional development: Narratives of four drama educators*. A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The University of Sydney, April 2002.

Arnold, M. (1960-1967). *Schools and Universities on the Continent: The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold*. 11 Volumes. R.H. Super (Ed). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Bailey, R. (2000). *Teaching values and citizenship across the curriculum*. London: Kogan Page Teaching.

Ball, S. J., Kenny, A. and Gardiner, D. (1990). Literacy, policy and the teaching of English. In I. Goodson and P. Medway (Eds.), *Bringing English to Order: The History and Politics of a School Subject* (pp.47-86). London: Falmer Press.

Barone, T. (2001). "Pragmatizing the imaginary: A response to a fictionalized case study of teaching". *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(4), 734–741.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-Music-Text*. Heath S., trans. London: Fontana.

Bayly, C. (1979). The influence of television on the reading patterns of adolescents: A sociological study. *Australian School Librarian, Autumn*, 5-10.

Beavis, C. (2000). What I really like now...: Renewal and curriculum change in literature teaching. *English in Australia*, 127, 51-58.

Beavis, C. (2003). English teaching and the uses of history. *English in Australia*, 136, 9-13.

Beavis, C. (2010) 'A Chart for Further Exploration and a Kind of Rallying Call': James Moffett and English Curriculum History in Victoria. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, 17(3), 297-307.

Bell, J.S. (2002). Narrative research in TESOL narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207-213.

Belsey, C. (1980). *Critical Practice*. London: Methuen.

Belsey, C. (1983). Literature, history, politics. *Literature and history*, 9, 17-27.

Best, J. W. (1981). *Research in education*. (4th ed.) New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Bibby, M. (1998). *Professional ethics and teacher practice*. Paper presented to a seminar organised by the Department of Education and Training and the Teacher Education Council. (pp.1-16).

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives, Handbook I: The cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay Co Inc.

Board of Studies, NSW. (2003). *English Year 7-10 Syllabus*. Sydney: Board of Studies NSW.

Board of Studies, NSW. (2007). *English k-6 Syllabus*. Sydney: Board of Studies NSW.

Board of Studies, NSW, (2012). *Suggested Texts for the English K-10 Syllabus*. Sydney: Board of Studies NSW.

Board of Studies, (2012). *English K–10 Draft Syllabus Version 2 Consultation Report*. Sydney: Board of Studies NSW.

Booth, W. C. (1961). *The rhetoric of fiction*. (2nd ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Broadus, K. and Ivey, G. (2002). Taking away the struggle to read in the middle grades. *Middle School Journal*, 34(2), 5-11.

Brock, P. (1982). The struggle for curriculum development in English studies, with special reference to New South Wales. *ANZTES Journal*, 11(1), 18-33.

Brock, P. (1983). Processes involved in curriculum change: A case study of New South Wales, Australia. In R. Arnold (Ed.) *Timely voices: English teaching in the 1980s*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Brock, P. (1993). Some reflections on teacher education programs for the prospective teacher of English in Australian secondary schools: A personal view. *English in Australia*, 106, 24–40.

Browne, G.S. (1932). *The case for curriculum revision*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry* 18(1), 1-21.

Bucher, R. Fritz, C.E and Quarantelli, E. L. (1956). Tape recorded interviews in social research. *American Sociological Review*, 21(3), 359-364.

Bunbury, R. (1995). *Children's Choice: Reading at Home or at School*. Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press.

Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods*. (4th ed.). Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education.

Calderhead, J. (1996) Teachers: Beliefs and knowledge. In D. Berliner and R. Calfee (Eds) *Handbook of educational psychology*. New York: Macmillan.

Callingham, R. (2010). *Mathematics assessment in primary classrooms: Making it count*. Paper presented at ACER conference 2010.

Caroll, R. (1989). Prophecy and society. In R. E. Clemens (Ed.), *The world of ancient Israel* (pp.203-225). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chandler, P. and Sweller, J. (1991). Cognitive load theory and the format of instruction. *Cognition and Instruction*, 8(4), 293-332.

Christians, C.G. (2005). Ethics and politics in qualitative research. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (3rd Ed.)*. California: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, D. J. (2007). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Clark, L. S. (2001) "Constructivist Methods in the Symbolism, Media and the Lifecourse and the Symbolism, Meaning and the New Media @ Home Projects." Paper available at <http://www.colorado.edu/journalism/mcm/mrc/symbolism/symbol-method.htm>

Clark, M.D. (2003). Turning the pages: Adolescents, schools and reading. Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Education. Melbourne: Deakin University.

Clutter, T. and Cope, J. (1998). Beyond voices of readers: A dialogue between teachers. *English Journal*, 87(2), 81-88.

Coalition of English Associations. (1984). Toward excellence in English. *College English*, 46(6), 577-579.

Coates, J.G. (1943). *Reading Habits and Interests of Victorian boys and girls in post-primary and secondary schools*. MEd thesis. Melbourne: University of Melbourne.

Cohan, S. and Shires, L.M. (1988). *Telling stories. A theoretical analysis of narrative fiction*. New York: Routledge.

Coles, M. (1995). *W.H. Smith children's reading choices project*. Nottingham: Routledge.

Connell, W.F. (1950). *The educational thought and influence of Matthew Arnold*. London: Routledge.

Connell, R. (1995). Transformative labour: Theorizing the politics of teacher's work. In M. Ginsberg (Ed.), *The politics of educators' work and lives* (pp.91-114). New York: Garland.

Connelly, M. F. and Clandinin, J. D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.

Connor, S. (1989). *Postmodernist culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Cope, J. (1997). Beyond voices of readers: Students on school's effects of reading. *English Journal*, 86(3), 18-24.

Cormack, P. Grant, P. Kerin, R and Green, B. (2003). Filling in a historical gap: Post-primary English curriculum in South Australia from the 1920s to the 1950s. *English in Australia*, 136, 67-78.

Coulter, C. A., and Smith, M. L. (2009). The construction zone: Literary elements in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 577–590.

Cox, B. (1989). *English for ages 5-16* (The Cox Report). London: DES.

Davies, C. (1996) *What Is English Teaching?* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks California: SAGE Publications

Department of Education, Science and Training. (2005). *Rethinking National Curriculum Collaboration: Towards and Australian Curriculum*. Commonwealth of Australia.

Derrida, J. (1982). *Differance: Margins of philosophy*. Bass A., trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dixon, J. (1967). *Growth through English*. London: Oxford.

Education Department, Western Australia, (1980). *The Martin report: Case studies from government high schools in Western Australia*. Perth: Education Department.

Eliot, B.J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Ewing, E. and Manuel, J. (2005) Retaining quality early career teachers in the profession: New teacher narratives. *Change: Transformations in Education*, 8(1), 1-16.

Fisher, H.A.L. (1917). Speech given in Manchester. Quoted in Mathieson, M. (1975). *The preachers of culture: A Study of English and its teachers*. London: Allen and Unwin. p.71.

Floden, R. E.; Porter, A. C.; Schmidt, W. H.; Freeman, D. J.; Schwille, J. R. (1981) "Responses to curriculum pressures: A policy-capturing study of teacher decisions about content". *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 73(2), 129-141.

Flywbjerg, B. (2001). *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again*. Translated by Steven Sampson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flywbjerg, B. (2004). "A Perestroika Straw Man Answers Back: David Laitin and Phronetic Political Science." *Politics and Society*, 32(3), 389-416.

Flywbjerg, B. (2006). "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245.

Foucault, M. (1976). *Society must be defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*. Macey D. trans. New York: Picador.

Foucault, M. (1979). What is an Author. In J, Harary (Ed.) *Textual strategies* (pp.141-160). Ithaca: Cornell.

Franzosi, R. (1998). Narrative analysis—Or why (and how) sociologists should be interested In narrative. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 517-554.

Freebody, P. (2003). *Qualitative research in education: Interaction and practice*. London: Sage.

Freedmon, B. (2003, April). *Boys and literacy: Why boys? which boys? why now?* Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research association, Chicago.

Freeman, D. (1989). Teacher training, development and decision making: A model of teaching and related strategies for language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(1), 27-45.

Gambell, T.J. (1986). Teaching literature K-12: A Canadian perspective. Report of the CCTE Commission on the Role of Literature in the English/Language Arts Classroom. Canadian Council of Teachers of English.

Gannon, S. Howie, M. Sawyer, W. (Eds.) (2009). *Charged with meaning : re-viewing English*. Putney, N.S.W: Phoenix Education.

Goodfellow, J. (1997). Narrative inquiry: Musings methodologies and merits. In J.Higgs (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Discourse on methodologies* (pp.61-74). Sydney: Hampden Press.

Goodson, I. (2005). *Learning, curriculum and life politics*. London: Routledge.

Goodwyn, A. (1992). English teachers and the Cox Models. *English in Education*, 28(3), 4-10.

Goodwyn, A. and Findlay, K. (1999). The Cox Models revisited: English teachers' views of their subject and the national curriculum. *English in Education*, 33(2), 19-31.

Green, B and Beavis, C. (Eds) (1996). *Teaching the English subjects: Essays on Curriculum History and Australian Schooling*. Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Green, B. and Cormack, P. (2008). Curriculum history, 'English' and the New Education; or, installing the empire of English?. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 16(3), 253-267.

Griffith, R. Massey, D. Atkinson T.S. (2013) "Examining the Forces That Guide Teaching Decisions". *Reading Horizons*. 52(4), 305 – 332.

Griffiths, P. (1992). *English at the Core*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y. (2000). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Ed). (pp.163-188). California: Sage.

Hall, C. and Coles, M. (1999). *Children's reading choices*. London: Routledge.

Halliwell S. (1987). *The poetics of Aristotle: Translation and commentary*. London: Duckworth.

Hancock, B. (1998). *Trent Focus for research and development in primary health care: An introduction to qualitative research*. Trent Focus, 1998.

Hardman, F. and Williamson, J. (1993) Student teachers and models of English. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 19(3), 279-292.

Hazel, P. (2007). *Narrative: An introduction*. Mount Pleasant: Swansea Institute of Higher Education.

Heikkinen, H. L. T. (2002). Whatever is narrative research? In R. Huttunen, H. L. T. Heikkinen, and L. Syrjälä (Eds.), *Narrative research: Voices from teachers and philosophers* (pp.13-25). Jyväskylä, Finland: SoPhi.

Heisenberg, W. (1930). *Physikalische prinzipien der quantentheorie*. Leipzig: Hirzel. English translation: *The physical principles of quantum theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hoffman, J. V., and Pearson, P.D. (2000). "Reading teacher education in the next millennium: What your grandmother's teacher didn't know that your granddaughter's teacher should know". *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(1), 28-44.

International Reading Association. (2003). Teachers' choices for 2003. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(3), 271-279.

Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ivey, G. (1999). A multicase study in the middle school: Complexities among young adolescent readers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34(2), 172-192.

Ivey, G. and Broaddus, K. (2001). Just plain reading: A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4), 350-377.

Jackson, P.W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rineheart and Winston.

Jago, C. (2003) The call of the wild: Using the elements of literature for comprehension. *Voices from the Middle*, 11(1), 64-65.

Johnson, D.C. (2003). The role of child development and social interaction in the selection of children's literature to promote literacy acquisition. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 5(2), 1-11.

Jones, K. (1999). Warfare, state identity and education in Europe. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 10(1), 5-15.

Jung, C.G. (2005). *Modern man in search of a soul*. (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge Classics.

Kelly, A.V. (1999). *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice*. London: Paul Chapman.

Koals, M. B. (1993, December). *Trade books used in the teaching of reading*. Paper presented at the annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference. Charleston.

Kohler Riessman, C. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Labov W. (1972). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: Univ. Pa. Press.

Launsø, L. and Rieper, O. (2005). *Research about and with human beings. Modes of research and research methods in social research*, (5th Ed.). Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck A/S.

Leavis, F.R. (1948). *The great tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen*. London: Chetto and Windus.

Lees, S. (1980). A survey of reading, 1978. *Australian School Librarian*, Winter, 59-61.

Le Guin, U.K. (1979). *The language of the night: essays on fantasy and science fiction*. (2nd ed.). New York: Putman.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1972) *Structural Anthropology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lewis, C.S. (1958). *Reflections on the Psalms*. Glasgow: Fontana Books.

Luke, A. and Freebody, P. (1999). *Further notes on the four resources model*. Retrieved March 25, 2010 from www.readingonline.org/research/lukefreebody.html.

MacLean, M.S. and Mohr, M.M. (1999). *Teacher-researchers at work*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.

Manuel, J. (1997, September). New ways for a new age? Reforming the English curriculum in post-compulsory secondary education in New South Wales, Australia. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference. University of York.

Manuel, J. (2009) "Teenagers and Reading: Exploring the significance and place of books in adolescents' lives", *Seventh International Conference on the Book*, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 16-18.

Manuel, J. and Brock, P. (2003). W(h)ither the place of literature?: Two momentous reforms in the NSW senior secondary English curriculum. *English in Australia*, 136, 15-26.

Manuel, J. and Robinson D. (2003). What are teenagers reading? *English in Australia*, 135, 69-78.

Marshall, B. Reay, D. and Wiliam, D. (1999, September). *"I found it confrontational": rethinking questionnaires as a large-scale research instrument*. Paper presented at British Educational Research Association 25th annual conference. University of Sussex. London, UK: King's College London School of Education.

Marshall, B. (2000). *English Teachers - The Unofficial Guide: Researching the Philosophies of English Teachers*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Mathieson, M. (1975). *The preachers of culture: A study of English and its teachers*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Millard, E. (1997). Differently literate: Gender Identity and the construction of the developing reader. *Gender and Education*, 9(1), 31-48.

Miller, B. (1980). *Teaching the art of literature*. New York: National Council of Teachers of English.

Misson R. (1998). Post-Structuralism. In W. Sawyer, K. Watson, E. Gold (Eds), *Re-Viewing English* (pp.144-153). Sydney: St Claire Press.

Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methodology*, 5(4), Article 5.

Moffett, J. (1968). *Teaching the universe of discourse*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Morgan, W. (1997). *Critical literacy in the classroom: The art of the possible*. London and New York: Routledge.

Morgan, W. (1999). Critical literacy. In Sawyer, Wayne, Watson, Ken and Gold, Eva (Eds.) *Re-Viewing English*. Sydney: St Clair Press.

Myers, M. (2000). Qualitative research and the generalizability question: Standing firm with proteus'. *The Qualitative Report*, 4, 3-4.

National Curriculum Board, (2008). *National English Curriculum: Framing Paper*.

Nay-Brock, P. (1984). A history of the development of the English syllabuses in NSW secondary education, 1953–1976: a continuum or a 'series of new beginnings'? Unpublished PhD thesis, University of New England.

Nehamas, A. (1986). What an author is. *Journal of Philosophy*, 83(11), 685-691.

New South Wales Department of Public Instruction (1911). Courses of study for high schools. Preface. Sydney: Government Printer.

New South Wales Department of Public Instruction (1929). Course of study for high schools, secondary schools, and other schools following the high school course. (11th Ed.). Sydney: Government Printer.

NSW Secondary School Board. (1971). *Syllabus in English for Forms I-IV*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education.

NSW Board of Secondary Education. (1987). *Syllabus in English, Years 7-10*. Sydney: NSW Board of Secondary Education.

Novitz, D. (1997). The anaesthetics of emotion. In M. Hjort and S. Laver (Eds.), *Emotion and the arts*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Opitz, M.F. and Zbaracki, M.D. (2003). Refilling your cup...New titles to pick up! *The Reading Teacher*, 57(3), 296-300.

Peel, R, Patterson A, and Gerlach, J (2000). *Questions of English: Ethics, aesthetics, rhetoric, and the formation of the subject in England, Australia and the United States*. London: Routledge.

Peterson, P.L. and Walberg, H.J. (1979). *Research on teaching: Concepts, findings and implications*. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

Pfordresher, J. (1993). Choosing what we teach: Judging value in literature'. *English Journal*, 82(5), 27-30.

Piccolo, G. (2009). Factors influencing teacher selection of literature. *International Journal of the Arts in Society*, 4(2), 239-256.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch and R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp.5–24). London: Falmer.

Preskill, S. (1998) Narratives of teaching and the quest for the second self. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49, 344-357.

Print, M. (1993). *Glossary of terms, in curriculum development and design*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Protherough, R. (1983). *Developing response to fiction*. Milton Keynes: Open University.

Purves, A. (1999). Towards a revaluation. In *English reader: Education A*. (pp.348-360). Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Reeves, A. (2001, November). *Reading this and refusing that: Case studies of high school students' patterns of reading and resistance*. Paper presented at the annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English. Baltimore.

Reid, A. Department of Education, Science and Training, (2005). *Rethinking national curriculum collaboration. Towards an Australian curriculum*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Reiss, A.J. Jr. (1979). Governmental regulation of scientific inquiry: Some paradoxical consequences. In C.B. Klockars and F. W. O'Connor (Eds.) *Deviance and decency: The ethics of research with human subjects* (pp.61-95), Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Reynolds, C. (1996). The English curriculum and social class. In B. Green and C. Beavis (Eds.), *Teaching the English subject; Essays on English history and Australian schooling*. Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1983). *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*. London: Methuen.

Robbins, E.E. (1952). *A study of the reading and film habits of Sydney adolescents*. BA (Hons) thesis. Sydney: University of Sydney.

Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1976). *Literature as exploration* (3rd ed). New York: Noble and Noble.

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1978). *The reader the text the poem: The transcendental theory of literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Sampson, G. (1921). *English for the English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sartre, J.P. (1964) *Words*. London: George Braziller.

Saussure, F. (1959). *Course in general linguistics*. Baskin W., trans. New York: Philosophical Library.

Sawyer, W. (2002). *Simply growth? A study of selected episodes in the history of Years 7-10 English in New South Wales from the 1970s to the 1990s*. Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Western Sydney, March 2002.

Sawyer, W. (2003). Editorial. *English in Australia*, 136, 1-3.

Sawyer, W. (2008) "English Teaching in New South Wales since 1971: Versions of Growth?" *Changing English*, 15(3), 323-337.

Sawyer, W. (2009). Language and literature: Revisiting some defining moments in the history of English. In J. Manuel, P. Brock, D. Carter and W. Sawyer (Eds), *Imagination, innovation, creativity: Re-visioning English in education*, (pp.71–86). Putney: Phoenix Education.

Sawyer, W. (2010). Writing (in) the nation. *English in Australia*, 45(2), 7-20.

Sawyer, W. McFarlane, K. (2000). *Reviewing English in years 7-10*. A report for the Board of Studies, NSW. University of Western Sydney Nepean School of Teaching and Educational Studies.

Schramm, W. (1971). *Notes on case studies of instructional media projects*. Working paper for the Academy for Educational Development, Washington DC.

Selden, R. and Brooker, P. (2005). *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory*. (5th ed). Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Selleck, R.J.W. (1982). State education and culture. *Australian Journal of Education* 26(1), 3–19.

Shavelson, Richard J. (1973). "What is the Basic Teaching Skill?" *Journal of Teacher Education* 24, 144-151.

Smith, C.B. (2003). Selecting reading materials for high school students. *Clearinghouse*, 183, 6-12.

Smith, D. (1999, February). *The what, why and how of reflective practice in teacher education*. A keynote address presented to Education Faculty staff, Auckland College of Education. Auckland.

Smith, M.L. (2009). *Comments on Coulter and Smith: The issue of authorial surplus in narrative research. Educational Researcher, 38*, 603-607.

Smith, David L. and Lovat, Terence J. (2003). *Curriculum: action on reflection*. Tuggerah, N.S.W : Social Science Press.

Starko, A. Sparks-Langer, G. Pasch, M. Frankes, L. Gardner, T. Moody, C. (2002). *Teaching as decision making: Successful practices for the elementary teacher*. London: Prentice Hall.

Thomson, J. (1987). *Understanding teenagers' reading*. Norwood: AATE.

Thomson, J. (2008). Reflections on the state of English. *Illuminations: Journal of the Arts, English and Literacy Education Research Network, 1*(1), 36-43.

Todorov, T. (1990). *Genres in discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tolle, C.W. (1977). Young people's reading interests-a Gippsland survey. In A. Risdale, D, Ryan and J. Horan (Eds), *Literacy for Life*. Melbourne: Australian Reading Association (ARA).

Tomashevski B. (1965). Thematics. In L. Lemon, M. Reis (Eds.) *Russian formalist criticism: Four essays* (pp.61-95). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Toolan M. (1988). *Narrative: A critical linguistic introduction*. London: Routledge.

Tucker, E. (1999). Wide reading in the English classroom. In Sawyer, Wayne, Watson, Ken and Gold, Eva (Eds.) *Re-Viewing English*. Sydney: St Clair Press.

Tuft, C. (2001). *Changing the high school core literature*. Master's Thesis. San Rafael, CA: Dominican University of California.

Turner, V.W. (Editor), Bruner, E.M. (Editor). (2001). *The Anthropology of Experience*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Vesper, J. H., and Brock, G. W. (1991). *Ethics, legalities, and professional practice issues in marriage and family therapy*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Watson, K. (1978a) *The New English in New South Wales secondary schools: A case study of the origins and implementation of the 1971 English Syllabus (Years 7-10), with implications for the future curriculum development*. Unpublished Med (Hons) thesis. Sydney University.

Watson, K. (1978b). The reading habits of secondary pupils in NSW. *English in Australia*, 46, 68-77.

Webster, L., Mertova, P. (2007) *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using a critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. Abingdon: Routledge Falmer.

Westerman, D. A. (1991). "Expert and novice teacher decision making". *Journal of Teacher Education*, 42, 292-305.

Whitehead, F. (1977). *Research project into children's reading habits*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Williams, R. (1977). *Culture and society 1780-1950*. London: Penguin Books.

Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Worthy, J. and McKool, S. (1996). Students who say they hate to read: The importance of opportunity, choice and access. In D.J. Leu, C.K. Kinzer and K.A. Hinchman (Eds.), *Literacies for the 21st century: Research and practice. 45th year book of the National Reading Conference*. (pp.245-256). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Yin, R.K. (2002). *Case study research*. (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Appendix A

Ethics



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Human Research Ethics Committee

Web: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/>

ABN 15 211 513 464

Marietta Coutinho
Deputy Manager
Human Research Ethics Administration

Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
Facsimile: +61 2 8627 8177
Email: marietta.coutinho@sydney.edu.au

Mailing Address:

Level 6
Jane Foss Russell Building – G02
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Ref: IM/PR

12 April 2010

Dr Jacqueline Manuel
Faculty of Education & Social Work
Education Building - A35
The University of Sydney
Email: jackie.manuel@sydney.edu.au

Dear Dr Manuel

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at its meeting held on 2 March 2010 approved your protocol entitled "An investigation of the principal factors guiding and limiting teacher choice of texts in the Stage 5 English classrooms of four New South Wales teachers".

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.: 12580
Approval Period: April 2010 to April 2011
Authorised Personnel: Dr Jacqueline Manuel
Dr John Hughes
Mr Giovanni Piccolo

Approved Documents:

Participant Information Statement, Version 1, 12/02/10
Participant Consent Form, Version 1, 12/02/10
Invitation Letter to Principal, Version 1, 12/02/10
Interview Guidelines

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007* under Section 5.1.29.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*. We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND
PROGRAM EVALUATION BUREAU**



Mr Giovanni Piccolo
1/5-9 Marlene Cres
GREENACRE NSW 2190

DOC 10/61452

Dear Mr Piccolo

SERAP Number **2009153**

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled *An investigation of the principal factors guiding and limiting teacher choice of texts in the Stage 5 English classrooms of four New South Wales teachers*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation.

This approval will remain valid until 12-04-2011.

No researchers or research assistants have undertaken Working with Children Check to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research.

You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Max Smith".

Dr Max Smith
Senior Manager
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation
23 April 2010

Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau
NSW Department of Education and Training
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5618 – Fax: 02 9266 8233 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au



Catholic Education Office, Sydney

Telephone (02) 9558 8201
Fax (02) 9558 3639

38-40 RENWICK STREET, LEICHHARDT NSW
PO Box 217, Leichhardt 2040

5 May 2010

Ref: Research Application 704

Mr Giovanni Piccolo
1/5-9 Marlaze Cres
GREENACRE NSW 2190

Dear Mr Piccolo,

RE: RESEARCH APPLICATION REF: 704 – LETTER OF APPROVAL

Thank you for the submission of your application to conduct research in Archdiocesan Catholic Schools under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney. Approval is given by CEO, Sydney to conduct this study. This approval is granted subject to full compliance with **NSW Child Protection and Commonwealth Privacy Act legislation**. It is the prerogative of the Principal or staff member whom you might approach to decline your invitation to be involved in this study or to withdraw from involvement at any time.

Permission is given for you to approach [REDACTED]
Sydney requesting participants for your study.

*"An investigation of the principal factors guiding and limiting teacher choice of texts in the
Stage 5 English classrooms of four New South Wales teachers";*

COMMONWEALTH PRIVACY ACT

The privacy of the school and that of any school personnel or students involved in your study must, of course, be preserved at all times and comply with requirements under the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. In complying with this legislation, the CEO, Sydney has decided that, for the purposes of research applications, students are not to be identified by anything other than age and/or gender.

NSW CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

It is noted that your proposed study methodology does not involve direct unsupervised contact with students. Approval to conduct this research study in Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools under the jurisdiction of the CEO, Sydney is granted subject to the researcher's full compliance with the 'Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998'.

As a PhD Ed student at the University of Sydney you are required to complete the *Prohibited Employment Declaration* only, the original of which I hold with your application package. Enclosed with this letter is a photocopy of the form, provided for signing by the Principal of the participating school.


When you have confirmed the participating school, please complete the attached form and return it to this office. It is a condition of approval that when your research has been completed you will forward a summary report of the findings and/or recommendations to this office as soon as practicable after results are to hand.

All correspondence relating to this Research should note 'Ref: Research Application 704:



Appendix B

Participant Information and Consent

 THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY	Head Office School of Development and Learning Faculty of Education and Social Work
ABN 15 211 513 464	
<i>Dr Jacqueline Manuel</i> Senior Lecturer in Faculty of Education and Social Work	Room 527 A35 Education Building University of Sydney NSW 2006 Telephone: +61 2 9351 3350 Email: jackie.manuel@sydney.edu.au

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Title: An investigation of the principal factors guiding and limiting teacher choice of texts in the Stage 5 English classrooms of four New South Wales teachers.

(1) What is the study about?

The study will be addressing the issue of teacher selection of texts for the NSW Stage 5 English classroom. The focus question which will be investigated is: Why has this text been selected?

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by *Giovanni Piccolo* and will form the basis for the degree of *PhD in Education* at The University of Sydney under the supervision of *Dr Jacqueline Manuel* Senior Lecturer in Faculty of Education and Social Work.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study will involve participating in a series (3-4) of one on one semi structured taped interviews.

(4) How much time will the study take?

The interviews will take approximately one (1) hour each.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

The study may indirectly benefit you by making you more aware of the thought processes involved in selecting texts.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

You are free to speak of the study with other people.

(9) What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Giovanni Piccolo will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact:


Giovanni Piccolo: 04XX XXX XXX
gpic7096@uni.sydney.edu.au

or

Jacqueline Manuel: 9351 3350
jackie.manuel@sydney.edu.au

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

 THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY	Head Office School of Development and Learning Faculty of Education and Social Work
ABN 15 211 513 464	
<i>Dr Jacqueline Manuel</i> Senior Lecturer in Faculty of Education and Social Work	Room 527 A35 Education Building University of Sydney NSW 2006 Telephone: +61 2 9351 3350 Email: jackie.manuel@sydney.edu.au

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I,[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

Title: An investigation of the principal factors guiding and limiting teacher choice of texts in the Stage 5 English classrooms of four New South Wales teachers.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.
5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio/video recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.
7. I consent to: –

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| i) | Audio-taping | YES | [] | NO | [] |
| ii) | Receiving Feedback | YES | [] | NO | [] |

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback Question (iii)”, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address:

Email:

Signed:

Appendix C

Interview Notes and Guidelines

Interview 1

- How long have you been teaching?
- What is your experience with teaching Stage 5 English? How many Stage 5 classes are you teaching this year?
- In general what types of texts do you use in class in Stage 5?
- How are these texts selected? What is the practical process of selection, both for longer texts (novels, drama, film, non-fiction), as well as shorter texts (poetry, short stories, and everyday texts such as magazines, comic strips, etc...)?
- How active/independent are you in the selection process? Does this change depending on the type of text the class is working with?
- In general, how do you assign value to a particular text you have selected? For example are you guided by the usefulness of a text for a particular class, or for its suitability towards reaching a specific pedagogical goal, or are you guided by specific literary theories, or in any other ways?
- Does this assigning of value, worth or in general usability and usefulness change with regards to different types of texts?
- In Stage 5 what do you look for specifically in a Novel, Drama, Poetry, Short Stories, Film, Non- Fiction and everyday texts?
- Please list the Novels you taught your Stage 5 classes last year, and for each one give an explanation of why the text was selected, if you had taught it before, why you thought the text is worth studying, and if you believe it was successful in achieving the aims for which it was selected.
- Please list the Drama texts you taught your Stage 5 classes last year, and for each one give an explanation of why the text was selected, if you had taught it before, why you thought the text is worth studying, and if you believe it was successful in achieving the aims for which it was selected.

- Please list the Poetry you taught your Stage 5 classes last year, and for each one give an explanation of why the text was selected, if you had taught it before, why you thought the text is worth studying, and if you believe it was successful in achieving the aims for which it was selected.

- Please list the Non-Fiction you taught your Stage 5 classes last year, and for each one give an explanation of why the text was selected, if you had taught it before, why you thought the text is worth studying, and if you believe it was successful in achieving the aims for which it was selected.

- Please list the Films you taught your Stage 5 classes last year, and for each one give an explanation of why the text was selected, if you had taught it before, why you thought the text is worth studying, and if you believe it was successful in achieving the aims for which it was selected.

- Again for the previous year, how did you make use of everyday texts in your Stage 5 classroom? How were these selected, and why? Were they used as supportive texts for any of the longer texts? How?

If there is time (max 30-40 minutes)

- What texts have you taught so far this year? (List in groups).

- What other texts have you already selected to be taught this year?

- Why have these been selected?

Interview 2

- 1) List texts you have taught so far this year:
 - Novels
 - Drama
 - Poetry
 - Non-Fiction
 - Film
 - Short Stories
 - Useful everyday texts
 - Why was this text selected?
 - Is its value solely based on its use in the classroom, or is it inherently valuable in the more broader sense?
 - Was it successful?
 - Was your original idea/intention made concrete in the classroom?
 - Would you teach it again?
- 2) List all the other texts you will teach this year. (Same questions as above, adding what is your intention? What are you hoping this text will achieve?)
- 3) What effect do you believe the following have on your selection process?
 - Syllabus
 - Literary Theories
 - Student's Gender
 - School/Parent Censorship
 - Class Ability
 - Personal Knowledge of Text
 - Available Resources
 - Canon
 - Personal Taste
 - Faculty Policy.
- 4) Are there any other factors influencing your text selection that you think are significant?

Michael Notes 3

Top Year 10 Class

Novels:

Harper Lee – To Kill a Mocking Bird (coming of age)

J.D. Salinger – Catcher in the Rye (other option not taught)

Poetry:

Robert Frost

Cath Walker

Non-Fiction:

Film – Bowling for Columbine

TV – Man Vs Wild

Booklet – Travel Writing

Film:

Yolngu Boy (coming of age)

Short Stories:

Henry Lawson –

Aboriginal Texts –

In program maybe taught

Primal Scream

Evolution

Drama:

Shakespeare – Macbeth

Everyday Texts:

Video Clip Cancer Awareness Ad

Order of text also important. Not start with Shakespeare as don't know the class.

David Notes 3

Year 9 and Year 10 class

Novels:

Robert Cormier – I Am the Cheese (**YEAR 9** - *Survival*)

Yr 9 not taught - Joe Simpson – Touching the Void

- Gary Paulsen – Hatchet
- Baroness Orczy – The Scarlet Pimpernel

Lee Harper – To Kill a Mocking Bird (**YEAR 10** – *Justice and Discrimination*)

Yr 10 not taught - Bryce Courtenay – The Power of One

- Robert Cormier – The Chocolate War

Poetry:

(**YEAR 9**)

Cath Walker – No More Boomerang

Wilfred Owen – Dulce Et Decorum Est

Bruce Dawe – Weapons Training

Colin Thiele – Dermot

Bruce Dawe collection (**YEAR 10** – *Consumerism*)

Non-Fiction:

Four Corners – Episode on young white man jailed for killing Aboriginal man in

Darwin 2009 and different view points (**YEAR 10** - *Justice and Discrimination*)

Advertising (**YEAR 9**)

Film:

Puberty Blues (**YEAR 9** – *Survival*)

- Yr 9 not taught
- Alive (*Survival*)
 - The Perfect Storm (*Survival*)
 - The Fugitive (*Survival*)
 - Touching the Void (*Survival*)

Mississippi Burning (**YEAR 10** – *Justice and Discrimination*)

Pleasantville (**YEAR 10** – *Consumerism*)

Macbeth Animation BBC (**YEAR 10**)

- Yr 10 not taught
- North Country (*Justice and Discrimination*)
 - Hotel Rwanda (*Justice and Discrimination*)

Short Stories:

General Stories for comprehension activity.

Legends of Australia/Ghost Stories (to read out loud)

Amelia B. Edwards – The Ghost Coach (**YEAR 9**)

Drama:

David Williamson – The Removalists (**YEAR 9**)

Shakespeare – Macbeth (**YEAR 10**)

- Yr 10 not taught
- Shakespeare – The Merchant of Venice

Anna Notes 3

Top yr 9 class (top 50) bit better than average

Novels:

Daphne du Maurier – Rebecca

Melina Marchetta – Saving Francesca

George Orwell – Animal Farm

Ray Bradbury – Fahrenheit 451

George Orwell – 1984 or Scott Westerfeld – Uglies

Poetry:

No poetry unit (poems looked at as stimulus for creative writing)

Jenny Joseph – When I am old I shall wear purple

Protest songs (connected to Orwell/Bradbury)

Nena - 99 red balloons

McCarthy - We're all bourgeois now

Non-Fiction:

Newspaper articles

Images of women

Magazines

Advertisement

Everyday texts

Film: Little girls in pretty boxes (documentary/film)

Film: Documentary on Eating Disorders.

Film:

What's Eating Gilbert Grape (connected to Saving Francesca)

Mary and Max (Other Option – not taught)

Short Stories:

Edgar Allan Poe – The Tell-Tale Heart

Roald Dahl – Lamb to the slaughter

Tim Winton – Excerpts from Novels

Drama:

Shakespeare: The taming of the Shrew (images of women unit)

Troy Notes 3

Year 9 and Year 10 class

Novels:

- Yr 10 – The Great Gatsby (Taught last year) (WANTED TO TEACH CATCHER)
(individual and society).
- Yr 9 – To kill a mocking bird (Taught last year) (Used to do with The Gathering.
Now they must select own non-fiction)

Poetry:

- Yr 9 – NO POETRY.
- Yr 10 – Anthology of Australian Poetry No Skrzynecki as not too challenging.
Diversity of ideas. Ball Ode stuff. Too much Australian Identity. White
Working class.

Non-Fiction:

- Yr 9 – Reality TV - Australia's Next Top Model (Taught last year) FOR GIRLS
- Football Superstar FOR BOYS
 - Would like to do WE CAN BE HEROES (Mockumentary Film requirement)
- Yr 10 – Frontline (Claim as non Fiction)

Film:

- Yr 9 – Luhrmann Romeo and Juliet (text and context for stage 6)
- Would like to do Rambo First Blood (Individual and society with Catcher)
- Yr 10 – Polanski Macbeth (text and context for stage 6)

- Kurosawa Throne of Blood
FUTURE IDEA OF NOVEL AND FILM instead of Shakespeare and film.

Short Stories:

Yr 9 – Collection of Australian short stories TIM WINTON (form and analysis NEW THIS YEAR building for extension 1 creative writing, WHY ARE THEY GOOD. WHAT IS THEIR VALUE)

Drama:

Yr 9 – Romeo and Juliet (Taught last year) Always for yr 9

Yr 10 – Macbeth (Taught last year) with Polanski/Kurosawa Throne of Blood

- The Crucible (4 years ago, connected with Gatsby for extension)
- Would like to do "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" (NO TEXT AND CONTEXT)

Everyday Texts:

Odd political cartoons (extra text as topical texts current affairs FREEDOM BURMA)

A lot of YouTube short videos

YouTube – Significance of Poetry (4 weddings and a funeral – Stop all the clocks)

(Kipling "If" – Mike Bassett English Manager)