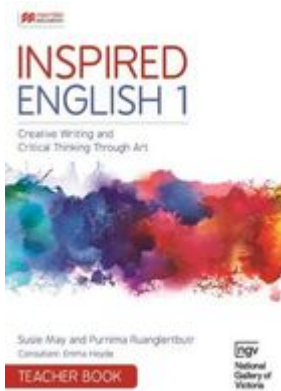




Inspired English 1 & 2



(Student workbooks) Creative writing and critical thinking through art
By Susie May & Purnima Ruanglertbutr; Emma Hyde (consultant) Macmillan Education, 2016

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Reviewed by Chris Thompson

The Inspired English series is built around the premise that meaningful curriculum links can be made with artworks as textual sources of inspiration for teaching key components of the English curriculum. The writers have developed the book's content based on workshops provided by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). The workshops promote critical thinking and creative writing through exploration of individual visual masterpieces as visual texts in order to engage students and develop their understanding of context – its historical, social and cultural aspects. The workshops also enable English teachers to address and integrate the language, literature and literacy strands into meaningful oral and written activities that require responses in a variety of forms to demonstrate their language skills.

[Note that the series has both teacher and student editions; only the student editions are referred to here.] Each student workbook is structured around five chapters or 'projects'.

Projects in book one are built around:

- descriptive writing with John Brack's *Collins St, 5pm*
- language of popular culture with Howard Arkley's *Explosion*
- poetry short forms with Kim Hoa Tram's *Pine with cranes dancing in the snow, dance in motion*

- the art of storytelling with Rosemary Laing's *groundspeed (red piazza#2)*
- writing about identity with Andy Warhol's *Self Portrait #9* and Julie Dowling's *Federation series, 1901-2001*.
- Each project contains similar elements and structure: a key art work as focus; learning intentions; an introduction to the topic; opportunities for close reading and creative thinking; an introduction to the type of writing/response to be developed; opportunities to develop, record and share thinking and ideas; practice in developing vocabulary and the descriptive language techniques associated with analysis and description of visual texts; opportunity to creatively apply language skills in writing. Students use the workbook to record their short answer responses that will culminate in their assessment task response.

Book 2 projects are built around:

- writing about war with Picasso's *Weeping woman*
- thinking and writing about racism with Yhonnie Scarce's *Not willing to suffocate*
- imaginative writing about gender and class with Orchardson's *The first cloud*
- investigating/writing texts in different contexts with Tiepolo's *The banquet of Cleopatra*
- myth-classical and modern- with 2 paintings by Robyn Beech.
- This series represents an opportunity for teachers to develop student understandings about visual texts as literature and the visual literacy component of the literacy general capability; all important in our contemporary multimodal, digital world. Although the texts are based around the NGV, the approaches taken are equally applicable with some adjustments, to local galleries in each state or region of our country, or to virtual galleries accessible online.

The series is attractively presented in full colour with titles, font colours and backgrounds providing clear signposting and easy navigation for users. Highly recommended for use with middle years students.