

FOSSICKING FOR CLASSROOM TREASURES

teaching English in the
Middle Years



MIDDLE YEARS CONFERENCE 2013

Monday 12 August
Castlemaine

OK, let's don the gumboots and dust off the metal detectors, it's time to go fossicking—and what better location to do it than amongst the grandeur of historic Castlemaine! Situated in the golden heart of Victoria, Castlemaine is just the place for us all to forget our piles of marking, reading (well, reading is not banned, but marking definitely is) and concentrate on being inspired by the range of workshops on offer. The day will kick off with award-winning author, Cate Kennedy. One of Cate's passions is creativity and how to nurture it. In her keynote, Cate will illustrate how writing can foster resilience, thoughtfulness, joy, connectedness and well-being. You will then delve into a smorgasbord of practical workshops. Forget the diet for a few days and indulge in this foodie heaven as you poke in and out of curiosity shops, antique shops, and art galleries with your VATE English colleagues.

Pre conference program

Author's talk with Simone Howell, author of *Girl Defective*,
Notes from the Teenage Underground and *Everything Beautiful*

Sunday 11 August

Stoneman's Bookroom, 101 Mostyn Street, Castlemaine

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

CATE KENNEDY

Cate is the author of the highly acclaimed novel *The World Beneath*, which won the People's Choice Award in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards in 2010. Cate's most recent book *Like A House on Fire* was shortlisted for the Stella Prize. She is an award-winning short-story writer whose work has been published widely. Her first collection, *Dark Roots*, was shortlisted for the Steele Rudd Award in the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and for the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. She is also the author of a travel memoir, *Sing*, and *Don't Cry*, and the poetry collections *Joyflight*, *Signs of Other Fires* and *The Taste of River Water*, which won the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Poetry in 2011.



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Conference prices

\$195 Individual, \$215 Institutional

\$150 Concession

Non-members please contact the office

Register at www.vate.org.au



Victorian Association for
the Teaching of English

Conference program

(at a glance)

Sunday 11 August
Author's talk

Monday 12 August

Registration and morning tea
9:00am–9:40am

Keynote address
9:40am–10:30am

Session 1
10:40am–11:55am

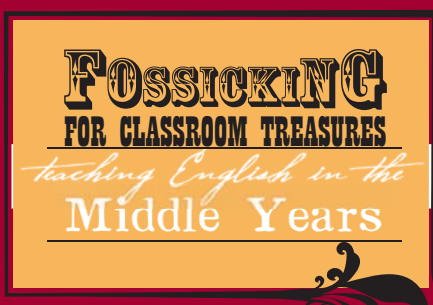
Lunch
12:00pm–1:00pm

Session 2
1:00pm–2:15pm

Session 3
2:20pm–3:35pm



Victorian Association for
the Teaching of English



Session 1

1a: Beyond the usual—assessing English creatively

1b: Engaging the global contemporary classroom

1c: Inference reading—a deeper comprehension

1d: Performance poetry

1e: Scaffolding character creation in creative writing

1f: Teaching film concepts in the middle years

1g: The draft—preparing for the big league

1h: *The Hobbit* and the fantasy genre

1i: Primary: Authentic learning experiences—examples and ideas

Session 2

2a: Artful English—teaching the Australian Curriculum: English and cross-curriculum priorities through visual art

2b: Fostering independent learning in the English classroom

2c: Literature circles—conceptual focused study

2d: Poetry slam

2e: Putting the art back into drafting—an approach to grammar through creative writing sessions

2f: Short films with great expectations

2g: Speak up

2h: 'We've all got issues'—introductory language analysis in a middle school context

2i: Primary: Poetry please

Session 3

3a: An approach to *The Hunger Games*—running an Aussie *Hunger Games*

3b: Energising creative writing classes

3c: 'I heard it through the grapevine'—using *The Sapphires* in year 10 English

3d: Stop killing books

3e: Teach your students debating

3f: Using found poetry in the middle school English classroom

3g: Visible learning in the classroom

3h: Primary: Learning with iPads

3i: Finding solutions for the difficult English classroom

Keynote address

'Creative' was the word recently singled out as the most overused in Australia in the resumés and CVs of jobseekers. Everyone wants to define themselves as a creative thinker but how can these skills be genuinely drawn on in the classroom, to influence and improve the way we approach the many facets of teaching English? What makes our subject meaningful and memorable, and how can we harness the often hesitant or latent creativity in students? Cate Kennedy has worked with many schools exploring ways to encourage more adventurous thinking in both students and teachers in secondary English classes, and has found a number of techniques over the years to refresh and reinspire the connections we make in the classroom. Her perspective as a practitioner—(she is often cited as Australia's premier short story author and has won many awards for her fiction and poetry)—coupled with a genuine enthusiasm for nurturing creative development in the classroom and enjoying and engaging with texts makes her a highly-sought after teacher, mentor and facilitator.

Session 1

1a: Beyond the usual—assessing English creatively

In recent years, VCE English has placed a renewed emphasis on encouraging students to think more critically and in an abstract manner. With this in mind, in middle school classes, the challenge lies not only in the ability to assess with rigour, but also to present students with assessments which are engaging and capture their imagination. Participants of this workshop will be presented with models of assessment in years 8 and 9 which use art, technology and visual literacy to assess students' understanding.

Katie Ham and Hayley Rosenbaum,
Bialik College

1b: Engaging the global contemporary classroom

Students today live in a global world, governed by IT. How do we use these ideas in a global classroom to engage all of our students? This workshop gives a variety of effective and practical ideas to engage students in every classroom, to embrace global issues and to use IT to interact effectively with students. Using visual presentations, the teachers will be challenged to move around and think about global issues and how students learn in the contemporary age. They will also think and learn about their own learning styles.

Rhonda Browne, Bellarine Secondary College

1c: Inference reading—a deeper comprehension

In this workshop we will be looking at the ways that we can encourage inference in reading, a deeper comprehension of texts. We will be showing you how to develop a set of strategies that allow students to move beyond the literal, such as 'The cat is black in paragraph three', to an understanding of motivations, implied meaning and inferred information about the text i.e., 'The black cat is symbolic of a deeper relationship'. We will be looking at four challenging texts and modelling strategies to encourage a deeper comprehension as well as looking at the importance of developing challenging questions and resources. Participants will take part in a series of hands-on exercises and will leave with several resources and strategies to employ in their own classroom.

Alexandra Dumbrell and Richard Watkins, Balwyn High School

1d: Performance poetry

Seeking enthusiastic teachers to participate in our Performance poetry workshop. Are you fearful of embarking on a journey into the poetic landscape? Are you interested in finding more ways to get students to take poetry from the page to the stage? Then join us for a fun and practical workshop, where together we will put the performance back into poetry.

Bree Kitt and Judith Simpson, Mater Christi College

1e: Scaffolding character creation in creative writing

By the end of the workshop teachers will have a short creative writing unit to take away, one that they will have experienced in fast forward! The focus will be on scaffolding character creation in creative writing, using Adam Elliott's short animations 'Uncle', 'Brother' and 'Cousin'. This unit has been used (with minor changes) at year 7–11. Help your students borrow from their experiences to bring to life unique characters in their writing.

Lisa Shukroon, Univeristy High School

1f: Teaching film concepts in the middle years

This workshop will examine the dominant film theories of the past fifty years and demonstrate how they can be used to stimulate middle school English discussions and tasks. The format will be introductory in nature, but will give examples of appropriate films and film terminology to give to these year levels.

Russell Manning, Yarra Valley Grammar School

1g: 'The draft—preparing for the big league'

This hands-on workshop explores various strategies to assist middle school students getting used to planning and drafting extended written pieces. We will draw on Barbara Minto's writing classic *The Pyramid Principle*, and focus on planning templates and redrafting strategies. We will also look at how to underwrite core skills, from brainstorming and planning, to editing and correction techniques. This workshop aims to entertain, stimulate and challenge established and beginning teachers alike.

Stefaan Steyn, Brighton Grammar School

1h: *The Hobbit* and the fantasy genre

A resurgence of interest in J.R.R. Tolkien's seminal fantasy novel *The Hobbit* is upon us, and it's a great time to help students discover the myth and adventure of Middle Earth. This workshop will focus on how to teach the *The Hobbit* in a way that allows students to overcome the drawbacks of a narrative which can become burdensome and dense, and to instead focus on the ideas, characters and world-building that has made Bilbo's journey one of the most loved stories of all time. Particular focus will be given to how group and project-based learning, iPads, Prezi and other digital resources can be used to allow students to engage with the novel and understand the role that the fantasy genre has in our literary heritage.

Matthew McDonald, St Leonard's College

1i: Primary: Authentic learning experiences

Jennifer White is passionate about creative thinking, authentic learning experiences and practical tasks in schools. She will provide examples and discuss ideas that can be implemented at any stage of learning.

Jennifer White, Toorak Primary School

Session 2

2a: Artful English—teaching the Australian Curriculum: English and cross-curriculum priorities through visual art

This practical program will demonstrate imaginative activities and games designed to make the art of creative writing fun and engaging for students. Using original multicultural art in the NGV Collection, it will explore ways to teach literary devices such as simile, metaphor, alliteration and onomatopoeia and how they may be incorporated in a variety of writing genres. Investigate how English can be linked to the key curriculum priority of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia through discussion and analysis of the literature of some Asian poets. Includes strategies for teaching students to write simple forms of Asian poetry such as Haiku, Renga and Rubaiyat, using visual art.

Susie May, NGV and Purnima Ruanglertbutr

2b: Fostering independent learning in the English classroom

Tired of tap dancing at the front of the classroom? This session will provide you with practical, tried and tested ideas and materials to help you to increase student participation and reduce your fatigue. The concepts of team work and competition as motivators will be discussed, along with suggestions for blogging and online resources to better reach (and teach) the Net Generation. Come along and share your own ideas about independent learning strategies.

Andrea Kocavska, Isik College

2c: Literature circle—conceptual focused study

'Displaced' was the chosen theme for this year 7 Literature study. This study met the many requirements of the cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum along with addressing how we can explore ideas and viewpoints about events and issues and responding to literature. Five novels were chosen to provide for the varying abilities in the class. Visible Thinking routines were used in the learning, and reflective practice was embedded in the content.

Bev Steer, Carey Baptist Grammar School

2d: Poetry slam

Come to this dynamic workshop where Marian Spires will show you how to run a Poetry Slam. Sounds violent but she guarantees no-one will be hurt in this 'hands on' workshop. She will guide you through an easy process of selecting or generating appropriate texts, developing performance techniques with students and then judging the performances using clear tick-a-box criteria. Bring a sense of adventure and be prepared to read some poems out loud.

Marian Spires, St Joseph's College

2e: Putting the art back into drafting: an approach to grammar through creative writing sessions

A writing workshop designed for middle years English teachers to address the Australian Curriculum requirement to teach specific grammar skills and drafting processes. Developed through an action research project, the intervention integrates grammar mini-lessons into the students' creative writing sessions. The approach centres on using the students' own writing to learn about grammar. Students then progress through various drafting stages, where each stage brings greater complexity to their understanding of grammar.

Brianne Cuthbert, Ballarat Grammar

2f: Short films with great expectations

Short films are an excellent medium for generating deep thinking and creativity. In this workshop we will view and explore short films together, generating fun and engaging activities to take back to the English classroom.

Bree Kitt, Mater Christi College

2g: Speak up

This workshop shares ideas and encourages all sorts of great listening and talking in the classroom. Participants will learn more about what public speaking really is, as well as practical ideas that work to encourage heaps of purposeful talk in the English classroom. This workshop is interactive and is closely connected to the latest Australian Curriculum.

Judith Field, Direct Speech

2h: 'We've all got issues'—introductory language analysis in a middle school context

This workshop explores multi-modal approaches to introducing the notion of bias and emotive language to middle school students. We will explore how best to cross over from the use of multimedia to more formal language analysis in an activity-based, student-centric way.

Stefaan Steyn, Brighton Grammar School

2i: Primary: Poetry, please

'Poetry is a search for ways of communication; it must be conducted with openness, flexibility, and a constant readiness to listen' Fleur Adcock. How do you make the poetry experience engaging, life affirming and vital for yourself, and your students? Find out in this lively workshop where poetry takes the central role. Tips, resources, advice and examples dispensed freely. Warning: the session will contain both poetry and participation.

Lisa D'Onofrio, Write as Rain

Session 3

3a: An approach to *The Hunger Games*: running an Aussie *Hunger Games*

In this workshop, Marian Spires will explore classroom approaches to the popular text *The Hunger Games*. She will share her 'hands-on' experience of running an Aussie *Hunger Games* as a way for students to reflect on their learning process while studying this text with her all boys class. She will reflect on the online resources available and provide handouts for activities that worked with her students.

Marian Spires, St Joseph's College

3b: Energising creative writing classes

Would you prefer to clean a loo rather than mark yet another characterless (in both senses), cliched, clumsy, childish piece of creative writing? I would. This 'hands on the pen' workshop explores ways we can encourage our students to get more colour and greater depth into their writing by using accurate adjectives, vivacious verbs, and impressive imagery.

Judith Simpson, Mater Christi College

3c: I heard it through the grapevine—using *The Sapphires* in year 10 English

The Sapphires, the hit 2012 Australian film, is based on the true story of four young Aboriginal singers. This session presents a unit of work based on the film and designed for the year 10 Australian Curriculum. It incorporates the cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as well as Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia. Participants will be presented with ideas for sample activities, resources and assessment tasks to help bring this unit to life in their classrooms.

Sharyn Burns and Carmen Stehle, Methodist Ladies' College

3d: Stop killing books

If we want to make reading come alive for our students we need to stop killing books. In English classes we often put books in students' hands that they have no interest in reading—and then analyse them to death. This workshop

will suggest and demonstrate several ways you can help kids develop their curiosity about books by making choices and sharing their literary observations with the true experts—each other.

Sandra Norsen, Daylesford Secondary College

3e: Teach your students debating

Debating is a wonderful way of encouraging your students to develop strong and well supported arguments. The other benefits include: developing public speaking confidence, fostering team work, improving general knowledge and increasing awareness of current affairs. It's easy to teach, once you know what's involved... and they will then be ready to participate in Debating Association of Victoria competitions! In this workshop, we will look at each step of the preparation of a formal debate.

Kirsty McIntyre, Glen Waverley Secondary College

3f: Using found poetry in the middle school English classroom

Students create found poetry by reshaping passages of prose from the texts they are studying in order to create a unique piece of poetry. It is a great way to engage middle school students (particularly boys and reluctant poetry writers) because it empowers them with the vocabulary and craft of the author, while developing creative thinking and insightful reading. Skilling students in the techniques used in found poetry can help them to identify and appreciate descriptive and figurative language while they familiarise themselves with the text and the conventions of adjectives and nouns used by fiction writers. Contextualising the process with the Ern Malley literary hoax of the modernist era intrigues and inspires students who would otherwise believe themselves incapable of writing poetry. Sonya Hartnett's 'The Ghost's Child'—dense with magical and often surreal imagery and metaphor—is ideal as a vehicle for this kind of poetry writing.

Sonia Murr, St Leonard's College

3g: Visible learning in the classroom

Students, using visible learning strategies, develop reasoning, make meaning and extend their understanding. A demonstration of the benefits, both for the teacher and the students, in the learning process is highlighted. Reflection is married in the learning situation. The classroom environment is highlighted. This presentation will allow participants the opportunity to participate using thinking routines embedded in the curriculum. This workshop will present strategies that can be used in any year level.

Bev Steer, Carey Baptist Grammar School

3h: Primary: Learning with iPads

Mobile devices are fast becoming a popular classroom tool to assist students with their learning. This is evident at Manor Lakes P-12 College where students have been using iPads for the past 2 and a half years to explore, create, collaborate, connect and reflect. During this presentation, Michelle will share how students and teachers have embraced the technology. She will explain how iPads are integrated across all curriculum areas, particularly English, and will engage participants in activities they can trial in their own classrooms.

Michelle Meracis, Manor Lakes P-12 College

3i: Finding solutions for the difficult English classroom

In many schools teachers are battling with groups of underperforming students or whole classes of disengaged and struggling students. VATE's Solution Group is a response to this problem. The focus of the group is conversations sharing 'solutions' to these issues. This workshop is a chance to discuss your problems and offer your solutions to colleagues who are experiencing what you experience. The time will be divided into sharing of successful strategies for reading and with writing. If you feel overwhelmed by your problems and bereft of solutions don't worry, come and hear what other people are trying to do. If you have some terrific solutions please offer them to us all. Chris Wheat will facilitate this discussion for all of us who share the same middle years classroom challenges.

Chris Wheat, Sunshine Secondary College

For bookings go to: vate.org.au

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