VCE English Task;
Teaching advice/briefing paper

Context; Issues with Identity and Belonging

Texts;
Fabian, Anthony (director), Skin, 2008
McCullers, Carson, The Member of the Wedding, Penguin Books, 2004

Other possible texts;
Miller, Patti, The Mind of a Thief, 2012
Mudrooroo, Wild Cat Falling, 1965

In conjunction with this briefing paper there is a Prezi presentation that can be viewed via the link below:
http://prezi.com/xkrbqbbfoh0/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

Activities and Ideas

- Assessment;

Students will compile a folio of four written pieces (and for English students, a written explanation for each) during the unit. This folio is a formative assessment of unit 3, outcome 2.

During the creation of each piece of writing, students are required to share their work with a peer and practice critical analysis. Students should be able to identify and analyse audience, purpose and main ideas or argument in their peer's work. Students should discuss, with each other and in their own explanation of written piece, how their language conventions shape the above criteria.

When designing this particular assessment task we took into consideration that students should be given the opportunity to explore various types of writing styles. We thought that it enabled students to explore and decide what writing style they would prefer to use in the VCE end of year exam; enabling them to write to their strengths.
A good starting point for teaching unit 3, outcome 2 is to have students explore the context of Identity and Belonging broadly in order to understand the issues, themes and ideas of the context. It is not necessary to draw ideas from the chosen texts at this point but to build and explore big ideas and complexities of Identity and belonging such as Nature or nurture: what makes us who we are? Defining ourselves through others: the paradox of belonging, the cost of belonging and choosing not to belong.

We suggest that students may begin their exploration of Identity and Belonging in the context of their own experience. This is inspired by the “Situated practise” phase, which is one of the five factors of “Multiliteracies theory into pedagogic models and practices” (Jewitt, 2007, pp. 248-249; Graham, Benson & Fink, 2010, p. 93).

**Introductory activities:**

Students could explore the Australian Bureau of Statistics website, ([http://spotlight.abs.gov.au](http://spotlight.abs.gov.au)) census and statistical data to encourage discussion of issues of identity and belonging in Australia. The website provides an interactive movie/game that helps bring the data to life and demonstrates how the students fit into the statistics of the census. The spotlight is on them as they create an infographic profile and students would enjoy how the focus is on on themselves and the quirky facts that are given. This interactive website can provide numerous follow up questions and activities that would develop critical thinking as students grasp a wider view of their position and identity within the country and world. Example questions could include

- How does the Census help us to understand identity and belonging in Australia?
- What does statistical data such as this reveal about people's identity/sense of belonging?
- What can the questions about the census tell us about collective identity and list of different generic groups people can belong to?
- Does the Census questions demonstrate that some factors of our identity are outside of our control? - This could link into question that Identity is not merely a construction from our external circumstances or genetics.

Activity adapted from [http://sacy12eal.wikispaces.com/Home](http://sacy12eal.wikispaces.com/Home)

The census activity enables teachers to focus on the Australian “collective Identity” and could be used further to explore National identity. Example questions to provoke critical thinking, could include, what does it mean to be Australian? What does it mean to be “unAustralian?” What are the consequences of adopting or being assigned either label? An article/website that is quite controversial and could be used for exploring “Australian Identity” is ‘Does Australia need a national identity?’ found at ([http://www.convictcreations.com/research/identity.htm](http://www.convictcreations.com/research/identity.htm)) This activity also follows in nicely to the Outcomes in Unit 4: Language variation and identity.
Mind/concept maps/ and brainstorming with graphic organisers such as venn diagrams are a great way to share ideas of Identity and Belonging within group and individual work. There are Venn diagram programs online that would be easy to use for organising ideas when comparing the two texts through the lens of the context that students can go back and easily edit and add to.

Mind maps could be used in an introductory activity for students to explore their own identities. An activity could include students creating a mindmap of themselves, including all the qualities, relationships, preferences and details that they feel is relevant to who they are; external and internal factors that tell us who they are. Prompts and titles could be given for students that struggle with this. The students would then work with a partner and create a mind map for each other. Students would then compare their partner’s perceptions of who they are with their own map. Follow up questions could include
- What comments and conclusions can you make about this?
- Many of the aspects you’ve noted on your identity map will change over time. Does this mean our identity is always changing? Is there something at the core that remains constant despite ‘external’ changes?

These mind maps can later be referred to for comparison of the identities and issues characters face in the texts studied. Introduction activities that can be revisited to see change and comparison are very effective with students.

*Activity resource and adapted from VATE 2012 Inside Contexts Exploring issues of identity and belonging, p. 10.*

As an introduction to the ideas and issues of identity and belonging, students could also participate in a round table discussion to consider initial thoughts on identity and belonging. The teacher may include 'devil's advocate' questions or prompts to promote debate. Another interactive way and possible activity to prompt debate and discussion is to post a number of controversial statements- possible prompts for the exam- around the room. Using post it notes students can freely walk around the room and write their thoughts feelings or questions about the statement. When completed the students would form small groups and give each group one of the statement sheets to prepare a report on the responses for the rest of the class. These posters could be added too and displayed around the room- as they explore the texts their thoughts and ideas could also be gradually included.

*Learning activity adapted from the English/English as a Second Language. Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design.*

Have the student’s research into the ideas and viewpoints of philosophers, scientists and psychologists on Identity and Belonging, such as Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Erik Erikson, Seven stages of development. This not only creates a working vocabulary- and lines and expressions, ideas that contrast/compare to dive into but also gives possible quotes students can start to work with.
Students can also link this research and theories into the texts.

Activity using text and Erikson’s theory;
Consider some of the significant characters in each of your texts in the light of Erikson’s theory. Can you identify stages that individuals have not managed to resolve? What is the impact of this in the way they see themselves and interact with others?

Activity resource from

It is important to provide students with the opportunities to read other texts such as non-print and multimodal to explore issues/arguments of Identity and Belonging. Students could be required to search for an issue relating to themes of identity and belonging in a media source - newspaper, TV, blog, magazine etc. Issue must not be fictionalised. It does not have to directly relate to identity and belonging, but must have wider implications of identity and belonging. This activity allows students to associate the Context in broader terms than just the chosen texts. Extending their ability to think about identity and belonging may help students to think about the exam prompt in a wider context than simply using textual examples.

Students could also keep an individual scrapbook (scrapbook could also be an online space- such as Pinterest or Wikispaces) They could include cartoons, visuals, art works, song lyrics etc. that they think relate to Identity and Belonging. Annotations will be needed explaining how it relates to context or text ideas. However we also recommend that teachers do the same; have a blog or something similar that the students can access where you can post inspirations or articles, paintings etc. that you noticed. This could also be a list of resources that you had prepared earlier for the students to access. There is a Facebook group that has already been set up with this kind of idea in mind. (https://www.facebook.com/pages/VCE-Identity-Belonging/199976110067932) which continuously finds life examples for the students.
Shorter set texts such as novels, short stories, documentaries, narrative films, television programs, websites, interviews, newspaper articles and speeches should be included when exploring issues of Identity and Belonging.

Examples of resources that could be used to explore the context;

- ‘Zero’ - short stop animation film
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOMbySJTKpg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOMbySJTKpg)

- The Age article “Star hits out at Home and Away racism” - links to text Skin

- Immigration museum website, identity, mine yours ours

- Sense of belonging: Pacific stories
  This interview with Joe and Monica Leo was recorded for the Pacific Stories website produced in 2005.

- Article in the Medical Journal of Australia citing that boys need a sense of belonging:

- Acmi belonging and identity - film and tv.

- The age article - Joffa's other side, guardian angel to the lost

- Innovative ideas for using artworks in the context.
  The National Gallery of Victoria offers a wealth of visual resources to assist students in engaging with ideas associated with the VCE English Contexts.

- [http://www.shauntan.net](http://www.shauntan.net) - Shaun tan’s picture books are also amazing resources to use with the context.

Exploring the “online identity” via virtual videogames such as World of Warcraft (gaming community) and Second Life (virtual world) could also be a great connection to make and use within the context.
• Watch Skin using Aspects of Meaning table

5 Semiotic Systems film critique activity

Prepare a table worksheet with each semiotic system and its definition. Divide students into groups of 5 and assign a different semiotic system to each:
Visual, spatial, gestural, linguistic, audio
Have students watch an excerpt of Skin, using a table to fill in the physical representation of their chosen semiotic system and the emotional response to the semiotic system.
Where a semiotic system is not represented (eg. linguistics may not appear in the chosen scene), have students consider why it was omitted and how the scene would be different if included.
Groups then discuss their chosen semiotic systems before the whole class shares their findings.

This is an advanced activity and therefore teachers may need to let the class practice this activity before this task is assigned.

• Rewriting sections of original texts changing the audience and purpose accompanied by an explanation of the reasons for, and the effect of, the changed made.
• Taking opposite points of view of a dividing event in either text, students will write letters to the editor arguing for or against the event
  ○ Refresher on persuasive language techniques
• Forum website with questions to answer as students read the chosen novel-questions will be more so focused on the ideas of Identity and Belonging to keep them on track with the notion that the text is not the centre of the task.
• Passage analysis - how does the selected text passage/scene reflect of discuss ideas of I&B?

• Using just visual images to express and discuss certain arguments issues of identity and belonging