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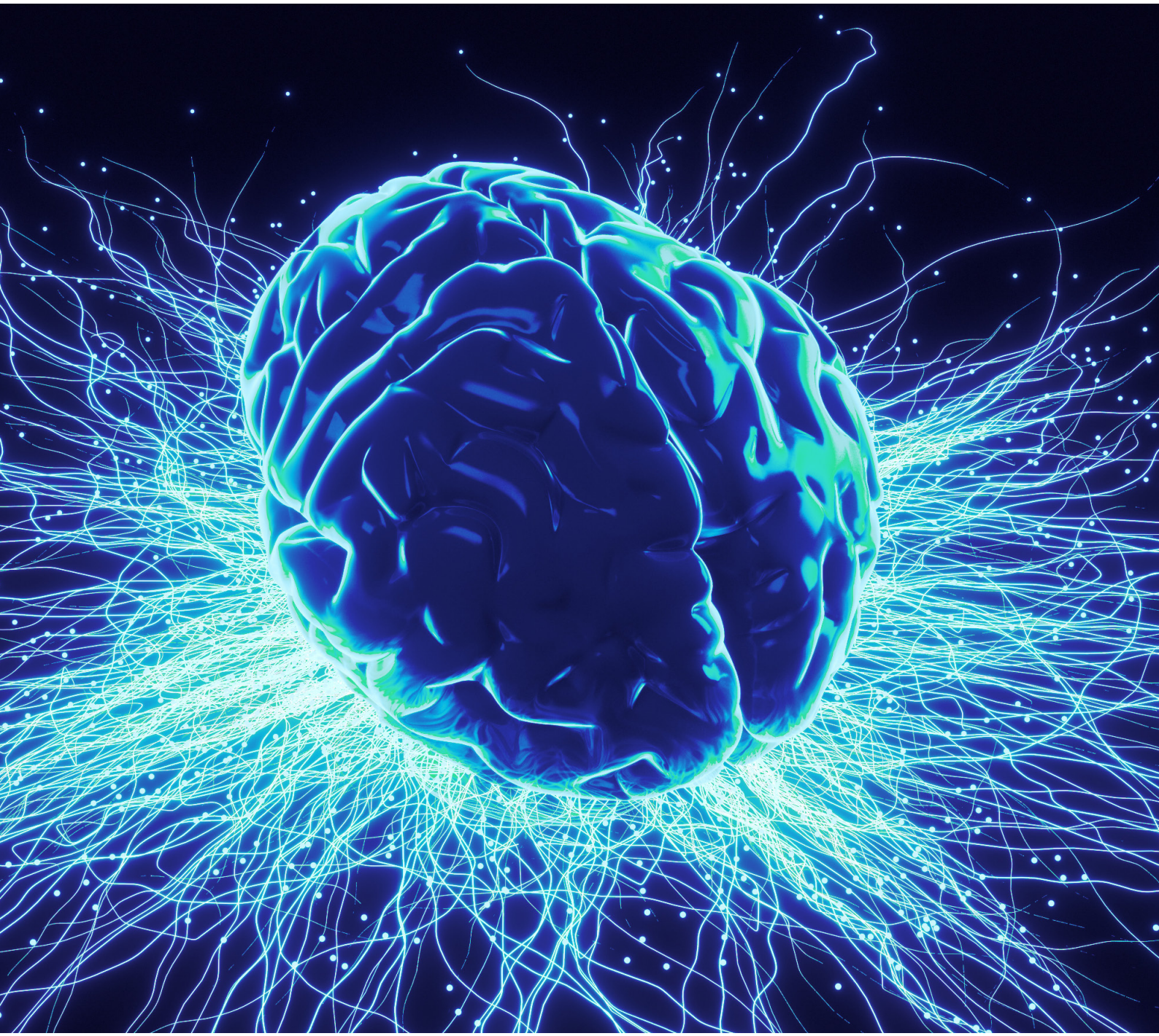
ENL*GHT

A LITERARY RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS



A PUBLICATION OF THE LITERATURE DIVISION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ACADEMIC GROUP
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE

***Enl*ght* is a publication of the Literature Division of the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Singapore.**

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EDITORIAL

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Ow Yeong Wai Kit is a PhD candidate at NIE. His research applies the science of learning about memory and emotions to the teaching of poetry in Singapore secondary school contexts. He taught English Language and Literature at a secondary school for several years, and served as an academy officer at the Academy of Singapore Teachers.

Nah Dominic is a PhD candidate at NIE, where he examines receptive and resistant student responses to ethically oriented Literature pedagogies in Singaporean secondary schools. He also co-wrote the *Teachers' Guide to Sense and Sensitivity* with A/P Suzanne Choo, published by Ethos Books.

Welcome to the 2022/2023 bumper crop edition of Enl*ght: Volume 8!

In May 2022, we publicised an open call for teachers to submit articles about their teaching practices. We aimed to recognise teachers' work over these past two challenging years, whilst drawing salient connections between existing praxis in Literature education and the emerging field of the learning sciences. Given the wide range of rich and meaningful contributions we received, we decided to divide the volume into two issues. The first, as presented here, is based on the theme of ***Literature and the Science of Learning.*** Our second issue, to be launched in the first term of 2023, will be themed ***Literature and the Heart of Learning***.

Both issues will showcase the diverse slate of innovative practices and strategies that seek to promote student engagement across multiple school profiles and levels.

In this issue focused on the Science of Learning, we are honoured to open with an introductory message from Rajarajan Udhayanithi and Dr Azilawati Jamaludin of the Science of Learning Education Centre (SoLEC) in NIE, signalling new interdisciplinary possibilities for bridging the fields of neuroscience and literature. Next, James Koh presents a primer for taking an evidence-based approach to teaching Literature, which helps to provide concrete applications of the science of learning to our schemes of work.

Two articles extend James' recommendations on cultivating rich knowledge schemas for students and using spaced learning approaches. The Literature Knowledge Organisers Network Learning Community (NLC) suggests concrete strategies on how to use knowledge organisers in our Literature classrooms. Yip Guanhui also shares about how retrieval practice in the Literature classroom can be applied to significant effect in aiding students' learning.

In other articles, we explore three different approaches for scaffolding the teaching of Literature for students. Based on a co-presentation at the 2022 A-Level Literature Symposium, Jeremy Tay's article elaborates on how we can apply concept-based learning through the application of transfer tasks across literary genres. Nicole Kang and Afiqah Zamri present their rationale for their bespoke annotated and 'translated text' of *Julius Caesar*, which helps students reduce their cognitive load in class, making Shakespeare more accessible in the process. Yin Mei Lenden further delves into ways in which students can be supported to write Literature essays more effectively using the SOLO Taxonomy.

This issue also features three ways of reviewing/re-viewing our cognitive engagements with the study of Literature. Ow Yeong Wai Kit makes the case for learning poetry by heart, and how the science of learning can inform the rationale and strategies for poetry memorisation. Based on a co-presentation at the 2022 Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference (RPIC) at NIE, the History and Literature Interdisciplinary NLC explores teacher collaboration and student responses on a unit integrating history and the literary arts. The final article is a short interview with Dr Astrid Schmied from NIE SoLEC on neuromyths that literature teachers should be aware of in their teaching.

Finally, we close the issue with a sharing of research snapshots from faculty and graduate students of the NIE English Language and Literature Academic Group, with updates on their current research interests and direction.

We hope that through this issue, we can raise awareness within the Literature education community about the affordances for making connections between the Science of Learning and our pedagogical craft of teaching Literature. If you wish to start or continue conversations from this issue, please feel free to email us at nie22.oywk@e.ntu.edu.sg (Wai Kit) and/or nie21.nd@e.ntu.edu.sg (Dominic).

Lastly, to Enl*ght's contributors and interviewees, thank you for sharing your practices and perspectives. In particular, we wish to thank Assoc. Prof. Loh Chin Ee for her guidance and faith in our editorial work, and Wan Zhong Hao for his attention to detail in designing this volume. To our readers, we wish you a restful end-of-year break as we recharge and gear up for the coming year ahead.

See you in the next issue!

NEUROSCIENCE AND LITERATURE

BRIDGING INTERDISCIPLINARY DIVIDES

by Ms Rajarajan Udhayanithi and Asst. Professor Azilawati Jamaludin
Science of Learning in Education Centre, National Institute of Education


Rajarajan Udhayanithi is a Research Assistant at the Science of Learning in Education Centre (SoLEC) at the Office of Education Research (OER) in NIE.

Asst. Prof. Azilawati Jamaludin is Assistant Dean, Science of Learning in Education at NIE, conducting research in the interdisciplinary areas of Science of Learning, Games and Learning, and Educational Innovations for Learning.

We are delighted that the theme of this issue of Enl*ght is on the Science of Learning.

The Science of Learning (SoL) domain is oriented towards the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge from multiple fields to translate scientific findings about learning into educational practices. SoL strives to build bi-directional bridges between various disciplines, including neuroscience, cognitive science, psychology, technology, and education, to provide a holistic understanding of learning. The Science of Learning in Education Centre (SoLEC) at the National Institute of Education (NIE) serves to fulfil SoL's interdisciplinary endeavours by utilising state-of-the-art neuroimaging, psychophysiological data capture techniques, and modelling techniques. SoLEC aims to investigate the underlying biological, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors that can transform learning environments and resources to optimise learning.

As recent advancements in SoL and its embrace of interdisciplinarity have attracted the attention of educators around the world, there has been a marked increase in interest in nurturing dialogue and intellectual engagement between SoL and other fields that have received surprisingly little attention in the past. Such fields include those in the domain of the humanities, and in particular, Literature in English is one such overlooked discipline.

Yet Literature is fundamental for an understanding of the depth and complexity of the human experience. Owing to the brain's prominent role in

communication and social interactions, SoL is uniquely positioned to engage Literature educators. Such partnerships present a burgeoning opportunity to broaden the scope of SoL beyond the range of the sciences, and to enrich our understanding of human cognition with knowledge gained from the field of Literature. In addition, such collaborations would allow SoL to contribute meaningfully to investigations of particular significance to contemporary society, and to paint the canvas of human experience in a way that resonates with varied audiences across cultural, national, and professional boundaries.

For the humanities, collaborating with SoL researchers would open the door for new and creative approaches towards gaining richer and more profound insights into how humans construct, participate in, and respond to experience. The application of neuroscientific research on the nature of the human mind, executive function, memory, attention, emotions, and related areas to literary studies, for instance, can shed light on how humans experience language, and how Literature influences our brain, actions, emotions, and reality, and vice versa. Consequently, the convergence of SoL and Literature would offer insights about the interconnected relations between the mind, brain, body, and sociocultural environment, as well as in the comprehension of literary writing, reading, and literariness itself.

The application of neuroscientific research on the nature of the human mind, executive function, memory, attention, emotions, and related areas to literary studies, for instance, can shed light on how humans experience language, and how Literature influences our brain, actions, emotions, and reality, and vice versa.

By bridging the divide between neuroscience and Literature, SoLEC aspires to advance interdisciplinary dialogues at the confluence of literary studies and SoL research. Our researchers are open to collaborating with Literature teachers and researchers, including developing interesting experiments using available instruments, such as electroencephalograms (EEG), functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), eye-tracking, and electrodermal activity monitors.

On behalf of SoLEC, we would like to thank the NIE English Language and Literature (ELL) Academic Group, and the Enl*ght editorial team in particular, for promoting greater awareness of SoL. We look forward to continuing to work together with Literature educators to elucidate an advanced understanding of the brain mechanisms involved in learning processes in the Literature classroom, and to utilise the information gleaned to optimise learners' educational outcomes and enhance the quality of Literature instruction in Singapore.

THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING

TAKING AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH TO TEACH LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

by James Koh (Raffles Institution)

James Koh has been working in the education sector for nearly two decades and is currently the Year 1- 4 Master Teacher at Raffles Institution (RI), where he works with the school's SSD to oversee professional standards and practices of the faculty.

His research interests include the science of learning, formative assessment, and metacognition.

In this detailed primer, James Koh explains and recommends ways in which the Science of Learning can be applied to the Literature classroom to promote students' knowledge retention for set texts, deepen their understanding of literary concepts, and encourage their writing practice.

The Science of Learning

As Literature in English teachers, we share common frustrations about student learning. While we conduct coherent lessons by presenting a set of key facts that are connected to a larger concept, our students seem to grasp only a fragmented understanding of these facts and concepts. In their writing, they either repeat memorised facts without seeing their connections, or they demonstrate an understanding of the concept but have forgotten the specific details of what they have been taught. Why do our meaningful and well-crafted lessons result in shallow student learning?

Over the past decade, an interdisciplinary field called the Science of Learning has emerged. This area of study draws ideas from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and education to help us better understand how memory, motivation, and learning take place. It is the Science of Learning that can help us understand the reasons why our students learn the way they do and therefore address the frustrations we have.

This article will examine how research evidence from the Science of Learning can be applied to the Literature in English classroom by exploring three questions that we commonly face in our classroom:

1. How can we ensure that students remember the details of their set texts?
2. How can we deepen students' understanding of literary concepts?
3. How can we help our students become better writers?

Forgetting to learn

Cognitive science points out that forgetting is very much part of how we learn. In fact, research shows that the rate in which people forget things that they have learnt is very high. After an hour has passed, students would most probably have forgotten 50% of what they have learnt.

Diagram 1 is commonly known as the forgetting curve, which outlines how much students will forget what they have been taught once a lesson has ended.

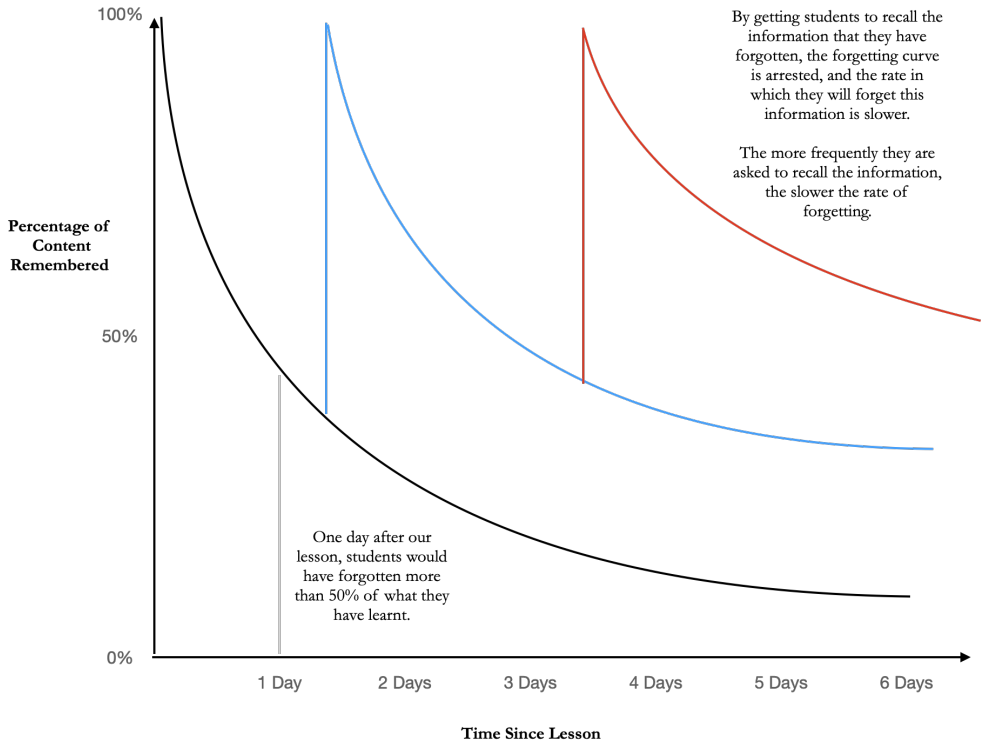

Diagram 1: The Forgetting Curve

When students encounter new knowledge, they make sense of it in their working memory, the part of the brain where thinking happens. The working memory is limited and for students to remember new knowledge taught, such knowledge needs to be encoded into their long-term memory.

Getting our students to remember

The research from cognitive science points out that getting our students to think during our lessons is a non-negotiable if we want students to remember what we are teaching them.

Yet, how often do we assume that passive listening to our explanation of a literary concept is sufficient? How much of our classroom talk is set aside for students? What percentage of our lesson is actually given to student thinking?

To address these questions, we should bear in mind the following guidelines:

A. Consider both the type and frequency of questions asked during a lesson

Questions drive thinking in the classroom. Many of us spend time developing the type of questions to ask, from lower-order questions to higher-order ones.

We do this using some kind of taxonomy, *e.g., Bloom's taxonomy, SOLO taxonomy.* Cognitive science points out that if a question asked is sufficiently challenging to the student (i.e., it is not too easy nor is it too difficult), then the student will be able to encode what they're learning into their long-term memory.

There is also the need to consider the frequency of questions asked during a lesson. We tend to think that we should only check for understanding at the end of the lesson, but we need to ensure that students are constantly asked to think during the lesson and that they are actively making sense of what is being taught.

For example, when introducing students to similes and metaphors for the first time, besides explaining what they are, we can frame the explanation with questions so that students are better able to make sense of this new piece of information:

Prior to the explanation	• The teacher provides a list of metaphors and similes to the class and asks the class to identify the common characteristic shared amongst the list of phrases. • The teacher can also ask students whether they can sort the list into two groups, i.e., whether they can see a pattern that differentiates metaphors from similes.
During the explanation	• The teacher gets students to convert a simile to a metaphor and vice versa. • The teacher can also get students to evaluate whether a metaphor or a simile is more effective in making a comparison, and when a metaphor or a simile should be used.
After the explanation	• The teacher invites students to provide their own examples of a simile / metaphor. • The teacher gets students to evaluate what makes one metaphor better than another.

During their encounter with this new literary concept, the students are constantly encouraged to think about this concept, which makes it easier for them to encode their understanding in their long-term memory. (The teacher may even want to get students to make their thinking visible, e.g., by writing out their responses.) If the teacher had simply explained what metaphors and similes were and then continued with the next activity, the likelihood of them forgetting the concept would be higher.

Another example that comes to mind is when we get students to watch a short film or a clip from YouTube. Based on what we know from cognitive science, we would need to

frame this activity with questions before and after the students watch the video. We can even ask questions during the clip, by pausing the video and getting students to make sense of what they are watching. (This is especially effective if the video is relatively long.) Watching a video is a passive experience and without getting students to think about what they are watching – even worse, if we (as teachers) were to explain what they had watched after the video – they will simply forget the information presented in the video.

B. Ensure that every student has the opportunity to think.

Given the importance of thinking, we need to make sure that every student in our class is given the chance to think. Pedagogically, we may want to consider the following:

Make sure students know whom you would like to respond to your question. Rather than allowing for chorus answers (which reduces wait-time and only gives the more able students the chance to think), we may want to use the technique of cold calling, as outlined by Doug Lemov. This is the technique in which we ask a question, provide wait time, and then invite a particular student to respond to it. In a classroom where cold calling is a routine, thinking is not an option.

Provide students with the chance to write their responses to key questions. Writing helps to clarify thinking, and by making all students write, every student would be encouraged to make sense of what is being taught.

Use technology that encourages all students to respond. This could be in the form of MCQs or short responses. Not only can the teacher track whether all students have responded, the teacher can also use the data formatively to modify subsequent teaching and learning.

After allowing students to forget what has been taught, we need to then get them to retrieve what they can remember. The more frequently they retrieve such knowledge, the slower the rate in which they will forget this knowledge, to the point where they no longer forget the information, i.e., it is permanently encoded in their long-term memory. Diagram 1 outlines this idea – by getting students to recall what they have forgotten after a period of time, they will remember what they have been taught for a longer time, i.e., knowledge becomes more durable.

To ensure that such retrieval is planned in our unit, besides focusing on what to teach, we need to also consider the sequence of what we're teaching. We can consider two strategies in this aspect:

a. Spaced Learning

At its most basic, spaced learning means revisiting a concept or piece of knowledge at spaced intervals, with a time lag in between. Our long-term memory takes time to consolidate new learning, and by taking more effort to retrieve the learning after a little forgetting, consolidation is re-triggered, further strengthening our memory of what we have learnt. This strategy thus helps us address the implications of the forgetting curve.

For the lower secondary curriculum, for example, some of us may teach the three genres in a chronological sequence, e.g., poetry in Term 1, prose in Term 2 and drama in Term 3. (Refer to Table 1.)

Period	Area of Focus
Term 1	Poetry
Term 2	Prose
Term 3	Drama

Table 1: Original Sequence

This approach encourages students to forget what we teach them as the year progresses. Using spaced learning, we can distribute the teaching of the three genres across the year, and this would ensure that students' knowledge of all three genres is more durable. (Refer to Table 2.)

Period	Areas of Focus	
Term 1 *5 weeks of Poetry* *5 weeks of Prose*	Week 1 - Poetry	Week 2 - Prose
	Week 3 - Poetry	Week 4 - Prose
	Week 5 - Poetry	Week 6 - Prose
	Week 7 - Poetry	Week 8 - Prose
	Week 9 - Poetry	Week 10 - Prose
Term 2 *2 weeks of Poetry* *3 weeks of Prose* *5 weeks of Drama*	Week 1 - Drama	Week 2 - Prose
	Week 3 - Drama	Week 4 - Prose
	Week 5 - Drama	Week 6 - Prose
	Week 7 - Poetry	Week 8 - Drama
	Week 9 - Poetry	Week 10 - Drama
Term 3 *3 weeks of Poetry* *2 weeks of Prose* *5 weeks of Drama*	Week 1 - Prose	Week 2 - Drama
	Week 3 - Poetry	Week 4 - Drama
	Week 5 - Poetry	Week 6 - Drama
	Week 7 - Prose	Week 8 - Drama
	Week 9 - Poetry	Week 10 - Drama

Table 2: Spaced Learning

Or if we're teaching a full Literature 'O' level class, we may teach the Paper 2 drama text in Secondary 3 and the Paper 1 prose text only when our students are in Secondary 4. But to address the implications of the forgetting curve, we should consider introducing the prose text earlier, e.g., during the second semester of Secondary 3.

Spacing can also be applied to the way we sequence our lessons. For example, we tend to have an exit card at the end of our lesson. The data provided by this check for understanding indicates that students have learnt what we have taught them. Yet this data provides a false sense of security as it does not take into account the forgetting curve that will occur once students leave our classroom. To address the implications of the forgetting curve, we may want to delay our exit card to the next lesson and use it to activate prior knowledge instead. (Refer to Table 3.)

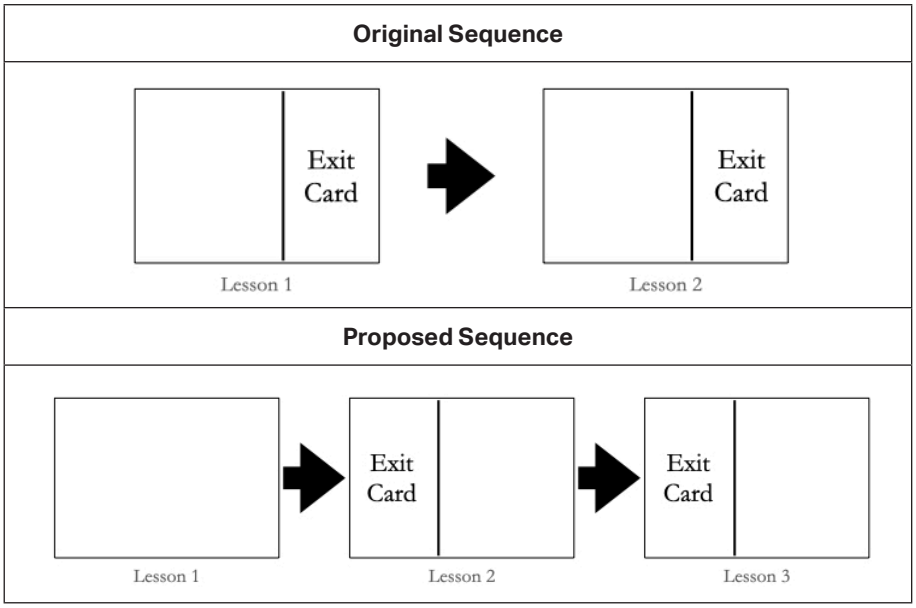

Table 3: From Exit Card to Activation of Prior Knowledge

b. Interleaved Learning

Interleaving refers to the practice of spending some time learning one thing, then pausing to concentrate on learning a second thing before having quite mastered that first thing, returning to the first thing, then moving onto a third thing, and then returning to the second thing, and so forth. In short, it involves the process of both spacing and mixing learning activities: the spacing happens by virtue of the mixing.

For example, in teaching the set text, many of us may teach students the text sequentially through the five literary areas, from plot, character, setting, language features, and themes. Yet, doing so would encourage students to compartmentalise these areas, without arriving at the understanding that it is the integration of all these five areas that make a literary text. Instead, we may want to interleave the way we teach these literary areas. Table 4 provides a snapshot of how this can be done, with the assumption that the way we teach each literary area can be divided into smaller units.

Literary Features	Lessons														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Plot	X	X			X				X				X		
Character		X	X	X			X	X			X	X		X	X
Setting				X	X	X				X			X	X	
Writer's Craft						X	X		X		X		X		X
Theme								X		X		X		X	X

Table 4: An Interleaved Unit

Another example is the way we teach short stories. We tend to complete teaching one story before moving on to the next. Inadvertently, by the time we teach the last story in the anthology, students would have forgotten most of what has been taught for the first story. We can interleave the way we teach short stories by teaching the first story

and then moving on to the second story before we have completed the first story, and then going back to the teaching of the first story later, after the students have had time to forget what they have been taught.

B. How can we deepen students' understanding of literary concepts?

One of the misconceptions we have about our students is that as novice learners, they are 'little experts'. But one of the key things that novice learners lack is a rich schema in their long-term memory. As pointed out, our working memory is where thinking occurs, and it is small and limited. For novice learners like our students, their working memory is easily overloaded. How then do experts like us overcome this? We have rich schemas in our long-term memory that we can rely on, and we easily retrieve information from our long-term memory to help us with the thinking that we are doing in our working memory. Thus, as teachers, one of the aims of teaching is to create a rich schema in the long-term memory of our students. Only then will they become experts in our subjects.

There are two key implications to this:

1. Thinking well requires a rich schema.

This seems obvious when we're teaching the set text. If students don't have the basic story of the set text in their schema, they won't be able to examine the literary features of the text. But how does this translate to the teaching of unseen poetry? Many of us regard unseen poetry as essentially skills-based. But if thinking well requires a rich network of information in our long-term memory – that is, to think well requires deep knowledge – then we need to recognise that for students to do well in unseen poetry, they would also require a rich schema. We need to thus move away from regarding unseen poetry as primarily skills-based; instead, for students to apply the skills in unseen poetry, they need to be taught a body of relevant knowledge explicitly.

However, this then brings us to a new challenge. What kinds of knowledge do we teach our students? We think that our students would need to know what a metaphor and simile is to analyse a poem. But what about the techniques of metonymy and synecdoche? Similarly, when teaching students rhythm, what kinds of knowledge do we teach them? Do our students need to know what a caesura or an end-stopped line is? And do they need to know how to scan a sonnet? Once we have outlined what they need to know, the next question we need to ask is when should students be taught these different techniques?

What makes it hard for teachers is that both MOE's 2019 syllabus document and SEAB's GCE 'O' Level assessment document don't specify the kinds of knowledge that we should teach students for unseen poetry. However, if knowledge is required for deep thinking to occur, in our schemes of work for unseen poetry across Secondary 1 to 4, we ourselves need to be clear about the types of knowledge that students should know to close-read unseen poems and when they should be taught these different types of knowledge.

2. What we know determines what we will learn.

In helping novice learners develop a rich schema, we need to show the link between the new information they are learning in our lesson with what they already know. That is why activation of our students' prior knowledge for every lesson is so important. In fact, according to the Science of Learning, the difference in prior knowledge is so important that its impact on learning is greater than the differences in general intelligence or capacity of working memory. In addition, imagine a student who doesn't have the requisite prior knowledge and we did not check that this was the case at the start of the

lesson. After this lesson, he would be in an even worse position compared to another student who had the requisite prior knowledge. In fact, research from the Science of Learning shows that the differences between students will become bigger and bigger, i.e. the difference in learning between those who have prior knowledge and those who don't increases exponentially. As the cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham puts it, the rich will get richer.

Given the importance of activating prior knowledge, we may want to consider the following three questions to help us become better in this area:

1. How much prior knowledge is required?

Rather than specific details, we should focus on getting students to activate prior knowledge about larger concepts and big ideas that help connect discrete pieces of knowledge. So rather than simply recall what literally happens in a novel, we should get students to recall the changes that occur to a character that we have been studying thus far.

In addition, given the importance of having prior knowledge to learn new ideas, we must be ready to reteach a particular chapter or concept if we find that students do not have the requisite prior knowledge to make sense of the new ideas. Otherwise, whatever we intend to teach them in this lesson will not be effectively learnt.

2. How much thinking is required?

A simple guideline to remember is this: the more rigorous the thinking, the more powerful the activation of prior knowledge. As activation of prior knowledge involves asking questions, we can scale the kind of questions to ask using a taxonomy like Bloom's taxonomy or the SOLO taxonomy. So rather than ask questions to recall the names of the different types of figurative language, we could ask them to explain what a metaphor is or to give an example of a metaphor, or to explain the difference between a metaphor and a simile. We could even deepen their activation by giving them two metaphors with a common tenor and ask them which is more effective.

Of course, the level of rigour expected when activating prior knowledge should be proportionate to how new the topic is to students. But given the need to activate prior knowledge for each lesson, for a unit that cuts across multiple lessons, we can see how the questions asked to activate prior knowledge should increase in rigour across the lessons.

3. Who is doing the thinking?

A common mistake that many of us make is to assume that recapping the previous lesson for the students is activating their prior knowledge. In such a case, because the teacher is the one doing the thinking, the students' prior knowledge isn't being activated.

Because activation of prior knowledge is so important, we need to ensure that all students are involved in this activity. That is why we should consider using strategies that allow all students to participate, e.g., getting everyone to write out their response to a question and using a digital platform (e.g., Padlet) to collate these responses in an efficient manner.

C. How can we help our students become better writers?

Many teachers tend to regard writing as an assessment activity that is to be included only

at the end of the unit. But if we were to draw a parallel with performance sports, this is akin to getting students to play a game only at the end of a series of sessions in which the game has been explained to them; instead, it would make more sense to get students to start playing different parts of the game even as they are learning how to do so.

How can this be applied to writing in the literature classroom?

1. Provide more opportunities for the students to write during lessons.

Essay-writing is a complex activity with multiple steps. While students may be conversant in discussing a text verbally, this does not mean that they can write a response that meets disciplinary expectations. To break down this complexity, we should set aside more classroom time for students to write, with a clear sequence that maps out how learning these smaller steps in writing will help them eventually write a full essay effectively.

For example, we may get students to analyse a novel for a particular unit by going through the various chapters sequentially during our lessons. But we could also structure these lessons by framing the teaching of these chapters with an essay question. Our lessons then become more purposeful as we can show how the analysis of these chapters helps to answer the essay question. This could also be done across multiple lessons, during which the students are able to do a number of smaller writing exercises:

- Students can write topic sentences at the start of the unit in response to the question, and as they analyse these chapters, they can refine these topic sentences accordingly.
- Students can write short paragraphs to translate their verbal discussion of specific moments into short paragraphs analysing identified quotes.

By having students write short pieces more frequently during lesson time, we will find that students will become more confident in their ability to do so, compared to a situation where the only writing they do is at the end of a unit.

One concern about incorporating writing as a learning activity is that there is more marking for the teacher to do. To manage our marking load, we need to categorise the short writing pieces as follows:

- Writing that we will mark as they provide meaningful data to track students' progress.
- Writing that will be used for class discussion and will not be marked.
- Writing that the teacher will scan through diagnostically and will not be marked.

2. Use worked examples to deepen students' metacognitive knowledge about writing a literary response.

A worked example demonstrates the thinking required to complete a task – in this case, how to write an effective response. This helps make the metacognitive knowledge required to write a response more explicit. By modelling such metacognitive talk, students will be encouraged to use such language as they self-monitor and self-evaluate their own writing.

The following diagram shows what a worked example can look like:

When making explicit the metacognition required in the worked example, we would need

Diagram 2: Worked Example

to be mindful of two different kinds of metacognitive knowledge required:

a. *Procedural knowledge* – this refers to the steps in writing a sentence or a paragraph, e.g., the PEEL structure, the steps involved in explaining the purpose and effect of using a particular technique.

b. *Knowledge of standards* – this refers to the quality of writing. While students can follow a PEEL structure or can explain the purpose of using a particular technique, it doesn't necessarily mean that the paragraph or sentence is particularly effective. The explanation could be naïve or mechanical, so students would need to understand how to be more conscientious in their analysis.

As students become more familiar with such metacognitive talk, when going through student work during a lesson, we can encourage them to provide feedback to their peers using the metacognitive knowledge that they have learnt through the worked examples.

3. Deliberate Practice

In order to make sure that the writing done by students is meaningful, we need to make sure that as they write in class, they're doing so mindfully with the intention of improving their writing. Otherwise, such practice can become mindless and repetitive drills that students find tedious.

To ensure such intentionality, the writing in class needs to be framed accordingly:

a. *Make clear the specific writing focus that students should be working on during this particular short writing exercise.* Are they supposed to be focused on analysing the evidence? Or should they be making sure that the evidence that they provide clearly supports the topic sentence of their paragraph? (As mentioned, given the complexity of writing an essay, helping students focus and improve on a particular sub-skill helps to make sure that the cognitive load on students is manageable. This is also how we help them improve in their writing – by breaking down the complexity of writing and helping them identify the various steps they need to improve.)

b. *Encourage students to be reflective about their journey in writing a Literature essay.* For example, students can scan and save all their marked written work on their personal learning device, and before they start on writing an essay, they should review their previous work and identify mistakes that they commonly make and which they shouldn't be making in this subsequent writing exercise.

Through all these strategies, we can promote students' metacognition while supporting them in their journey towards developing greater skill and confidence in writing. By applying insights from the Science of Learning to our Literature lessons, we can improve students' knowledge of their texts, deepen their understanding of literary concepts, and equip them to become much more effective learners.

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VISUALISING A SENSE OF PLACE

APPLYING CONCEPT-BASED LEARNING THROUGH TRANSFER TASKS ACROSS LITERATURE GENRES

by Tay Kiah Koon Jeremy (Temasek Junior College)

Photo by Wesley Pribadi on Unsplash

Based on the Junior College context, Jeremy Tay outlines the implementation of concept-based learning, which involves teaching students about literary techniques that contribute to the realisation of a "sense of place" across prose and drama.

Jeremy Tay teaches English Literature in Temasek Junior College. He previously taught General Paper and Knowledge and Inquiry, and was a curriculum officer at the Gifted Education Branch.

Besides teaching Literature and mentoring students on research projects, he is currently working on a Master's degree in Information Studies at NTU. He also likes cats and coffee.

As readers and teachers of literature, we are invariably dealing with a multitude of concepts whenever we read a text, whether it is in terms of thinking about genres, themes, or human emotions and motivations. Students readily build on their experience and knowledge of themes like possessiveness and love, from their early encounters with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. They understand the concept of duty and obligation, and can readily expound on ideas of these across texts like *Hamlet* or Barker's *Regeneration*.

Despite students' proficiency in discussing thematic concepts within and across texts of different genres, many are unconfident in their ability to discuss how these ideas are communicated through literary techniques across genres. In the Junior College classroom, as at Secondary levels, students are inclined to study their texts in the isolated genres of poetry, prose and drama. Discussing the use of symbolism in a poem is well and good; but if the use of symbolism needs to be compared across a poem *and* a play, and if other genre-specific techniques like the use of props needs to be explained, many students start to feel overwhelmed. Discussions on authors' uses of perspective across genres (e.g. the narrative voice in prose versus the audience's perspective of the stage in theatre) is too intimidating to even consider. For this reason, many JC teachers are inclined to encourage students to compare texts of the same genre for the comparison section in the topical paper (Papers 2 or 3 Section B); students prefer this choice as well, due to their insecurities about making cross-genre technique comparisons.

This is an unusual situation as literary techniques are also concepts — mental constructs that are timeless, abstract, universal — and hence transferable (Erickson, Lynn et al., 2017). Students' knowledge of techniques should be transferable in the same way that their understanding of themes and literary genres are. The disinclination or resistance to consider how literary techniques work in similar or different ways across various genres is a limiting factor for students' understanding of how literature communicates ideas and meaning.

At this year's 'A' Level Literature Symposium, Daryl Yap (DHS), Gregory Loh (CJC) and I shared our attempt at using Concept-Based Learning (CBL) in teaching Literature. We studied Erickson and Lanning's *Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom* (2017), and designed two 50-minute lessons using drama and prose extracts for students to reflect on and evaluate the literary techniques that create a "sense of place", while promoting collaboration and creative thinking.

Concept-Based Learning and Lanning's Structure of Process

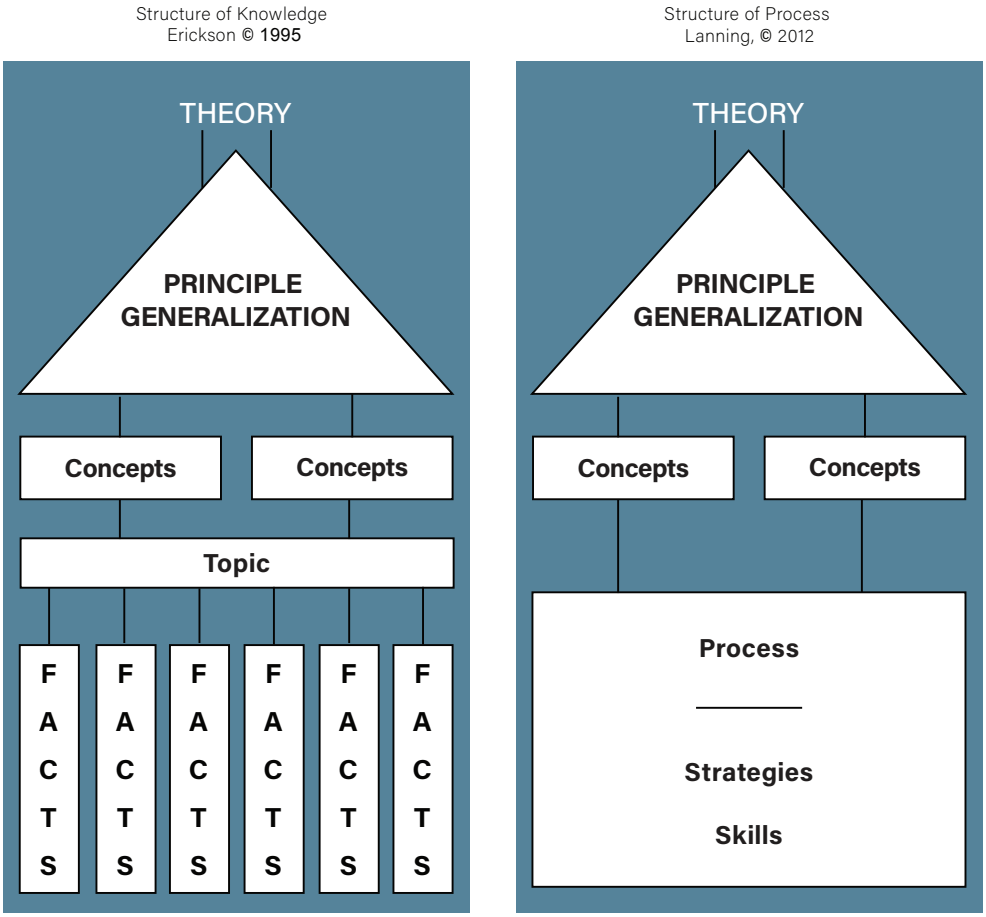


Fig 1: A comparison of Erickson's and Lanning's Structure of Knowledge and Process

In the traditional classroom, teaching is focused on imparting factual and topical knowledge. Facts are specific examples of people, places, situations and things, whereas topics are an organisational principle for a set of facts (e.g. Romantic poetry). While these are important, knowledge that remains at the level of facts and topics are not readily transferable to new contexts.

This diminishes the impact of students' learning, and does not encourage them to build on their knowledge in other areas inside and outside the discipline.

The aim of CBL is for students to understand relevant conceptual ideas related to topics and facts (e.g. the themes of nature and the sublime, with Romantic poetry). With this renewed understanding, students can then make generalisations that link more than one concept in a relationship that transfers across time, cultures and situations (e.g. the *sublime* is an *experience* of awe-inspiring vastness, and can be seen in nature and human industry). Lanning added a complementary model to Erickson's Structure of Knowledge model by describing the Structure of Process, a model which more accurately describes the learning experience for many humanities subjects such as Literature and Music.

The process of (close-) reading involves the use of multiple strategies and skills, as shown in Fig. 2.

Despite students' proficiency in discussing thematic concepts within and across texts of different genres, many are unconfident in their ability to discuss how these ideas are communicated through literary techniques across genres.

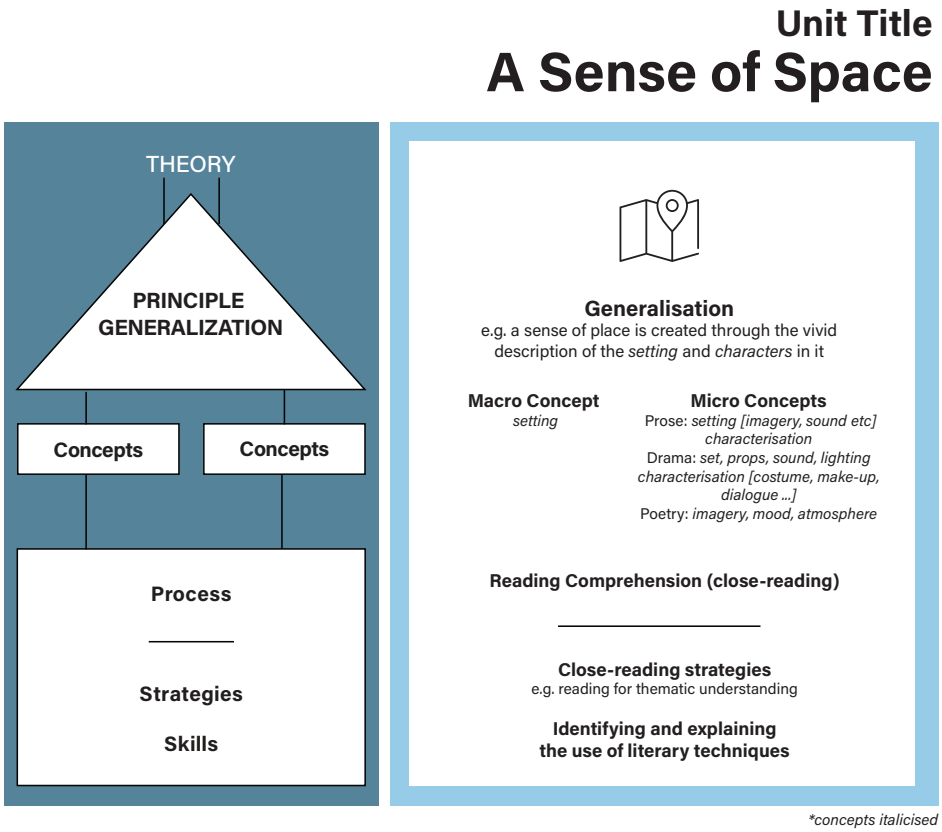


Fig 2: A brief overview of the concepts taught in the lesson

Lesson 1:

1. Close-read an extract from the start of a play describing the set (the opening of Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*). Focus on how the use of literary techniques, and how these contribute to creating a sense of space.

2. Look at pictures of a set professionally produced for the play. Identify how the set designer responded to the descriptions in the script. Comment on and evaluate the choices that they made for the set and props.

Lesson 2:

1. Close-read an extract of a prose piece (extracted from Chapter 2 of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*). Focus on the use of literary techniques, and how these contribute to creating a sense of place.

2. Imagine that you are adapting this extract for the stage. Illustrate your set design, using stage directions where appropriate. Explain the literary techniques you are using, and the significance of those choices in creating a sense of place.

Link to the worksheet

For our lessons, we focused on teaching students about literary techniques that contribute to the realisation of a "sense of place". While we envisioned this as being more pertinent to prose and drama, it has relevance to poetry as well, in the evocation of distinct places and experiences through techniques such as imagery.

We designed two lessons, each incorporating two tasks. They work best together, but either lesson could be run on its own.

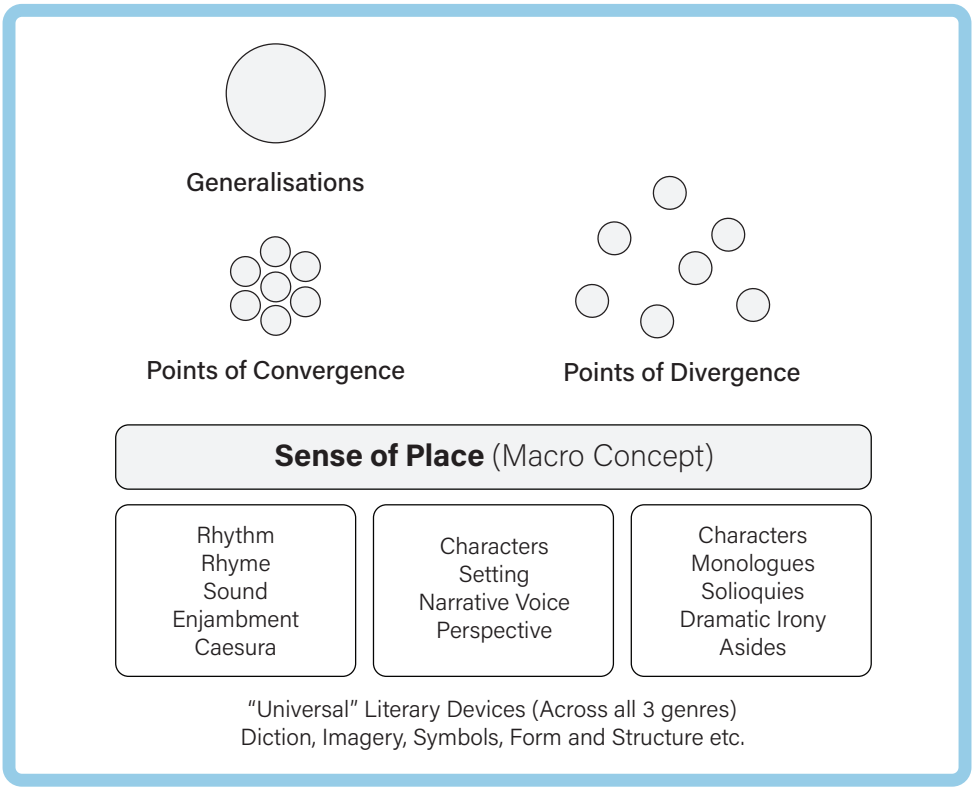


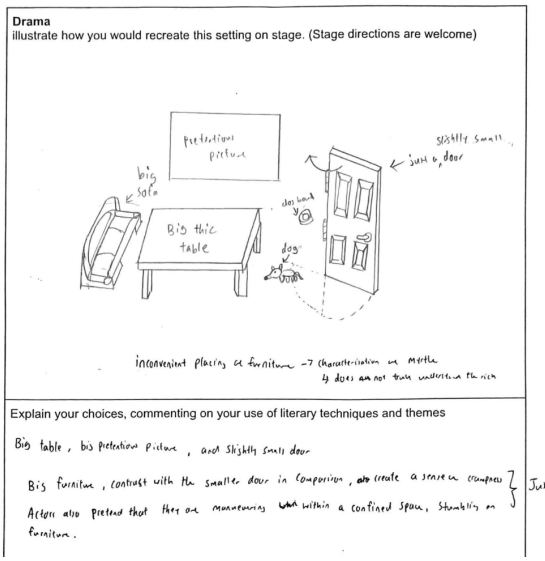
Fig 3. The micro-concepts of genre techniques can contribute in covergent or divergent ways

At the end of Lesson 2's second task, students were asked to reflect on possible generalisations they could make about the use of literary techniques across prose and drama, and to comment on similarities (points of convergence) and differences (points of divergence) in the literary techniques.

Students' work samples

The students chosen for this lesson were J2 H1 and H2 students who had studied *The Great Gatsby* in JC1 and who had had at least 2 terms of drama practice. The scene was a familiar one for them, and students took to the task readily — it was the setting of Myrtle's apartment, where she maintained an affair with the married Tom Buchanan. Here, her working class background and her desire for social climbing is presently starkly through her garish decor and materialistic tendencies and pretensions.

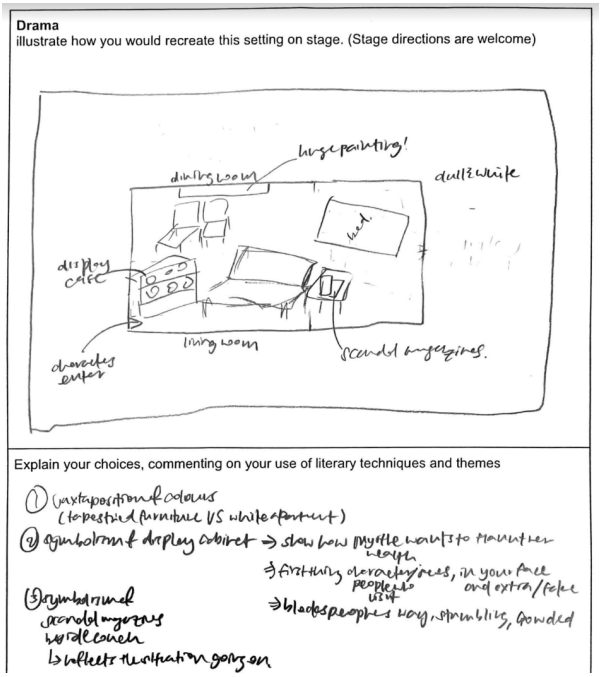
Some exemplars of student work are shown below:



In this sample, the students focused on the use of juxtaposition to illusstrate how Myrtle's pretentious dreams were larger than her lived reality. The use of "big" furniture contrasted against a "smaller door" showed how unrealistic her expectations were—and also the size of her dreams.

The stage directions for actors to "pretend they are maneuvering within a confined space, stumbling on furniture" acccentuated this effect.

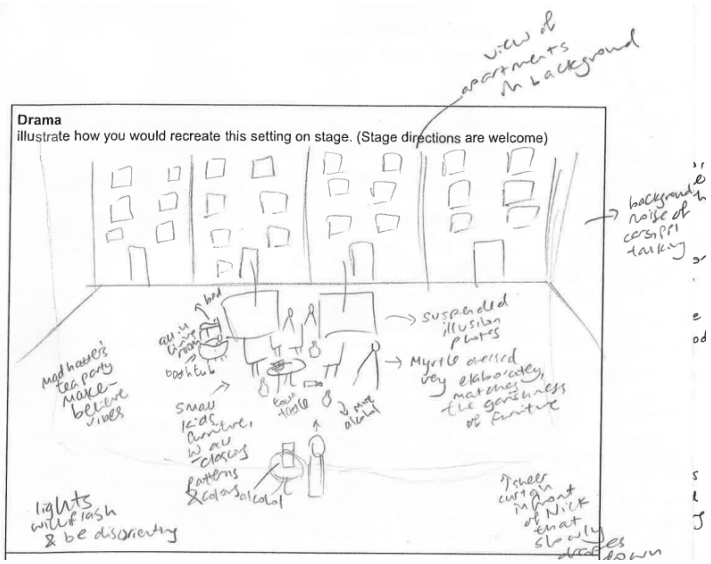
Figure 4. H1 Student Group 1



This student group also chose juxtaposition as a key literary technique. However, they focused on the symbolism of colours —between the respectable and plain whiteness of the apartment and its contrast with the "tapestried furniture", showing how jarring and tasteless Myrtle's decor was.

The use of symbolism was seen in the placement of props like the "scandal magazines" or the display case, which suggested Myrtle's materialism and acquisitiveness—building on her characterisation.

Figure 5. H1 Student Group 2

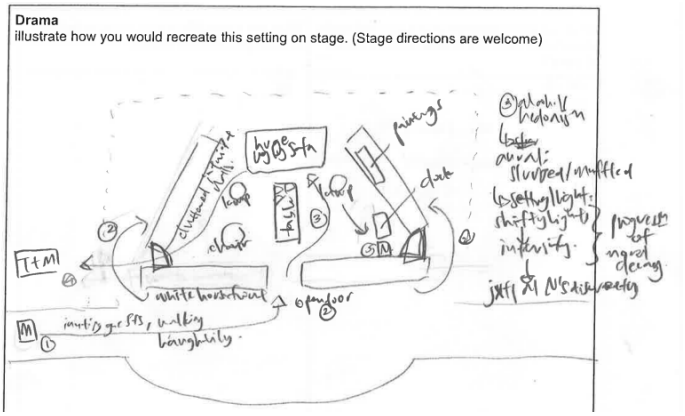


This H2 group employed more dramatic techniques, bringing in the idea of a painted backdrop of uniform white apartment fronts. Here, they chose to have small furniture instead, to create a "Mad Hatter's tea party make-believe vibes". The furniture becomes symbolic of Myrtle's childish naivete.

This group also used lights, with flashing effects to create a "disorienting effect", to show Nick's increasing inebriation and his experience of events.

Finally, they used costumes to depict Myrtle's "elaborate" and "garish" style, which complements her similarly gaudy furniture choices.

Figure 6. H2 Student Group 1



This group featured a moving set, with the "walls" opening up to reveal the inner walls of the apartment. The swinging walls create a more confined space, which symbolises the claustrophobic smallness of Myrtle's life and opportunities.

They would also use disorienting light and sound effects to convey Nick's subjective perspective, as he becomes increasingly drunk through the scene.

Figure 7. H2 Student Group 2

As the student groups presented their work to the class, they were able to articulate the effects and meaning that they had aimed to convey through their deliberate choices of literary techniques. In their reflections, they also made some thoughtful observations, such as how:

- The interactions of characters / actors with the setting creates an effect on both the setting and for characterization
- The juxtaposition of things / objects in the setting creates meaning, and can be symbolic
- The description of setting employs imagery and other sensory techniques
- A place is perceived by someone's point of view—whether it is a character (narrator) or the audience

While the transference of conceptual understanding from one genre to another was somewhat uneven across groups, students did gain a greater sensitivity to genre-specific devices and the effects that they could achieve.

Stronger students made interesting observations about differences in the genres (e.g. on the use of props and perspective), whereas weaker students required more support through scaffolded guiding questions. They generally found the creative experience fun and insightful.

Possible uses of ICT

While the lesson was conducted with the use of hard-copy worksheets, it could also be held on Google Jamboard, which would allow multiple students to mark up photographs and collaborate on drawing the set. To collect students' reflections on the transfer of techniques across genres, a tool like Padlet would allow students to easily upvote and comment on their classmates' observations. While these applications are fairly user-friendly, some familiarity with their use in the classroom would be ideal before students are set to engage in these tasks.

Possible extensions

These lessons might be adapted and extended for different student age groups:

- JC teachers: the lessons might be extended through the addition of poetry comparisons (*'Kubla Khan'* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is an apt choice for imagery), or formative essay writing tasks (Google Classroom is useful for formative writing tasks as students can "resubmit" their essays for further feedback).
- Upper secondary teachers: while comparison is not required at the 'O' Levels, pure literature teachers can use this as revision for both set texts (prose - paper 1; drama - paper 2) and elective literature teachers can use this to compare different moments within a single set text (prose, i.e. Paper 1)
- Lower secondary teachers: similarly, teachers can draw intertextual connections across different texts in lower secondary as they move from prose to drama (especially for schools teaching *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed*).

Concept-Based Learning also fits naturally into the Knowledge Building Classroom. In exploring their understanding of literary techniques as concepts and applying them in original ways in the transfer task, students recognise that their ideas are improvable. Students can seek to rise above the simple application of literary techniques to consider how different genre-specific or general techniques could complement each other in creating more interesting effects.

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SOLO TAXONOMY

OR HOW STUDENTS CAN BE SUPPORTED TO WRITE LITERATURE ESSAYS MORE EFFECTIVELY AND CONFIDENTLY

by Yin Mei Lenden (CHIJ Katong Convent)

Yin Mei Lenden proposes the use of SOLO taxonomies to support Literature students in formulating independent analysis of their texts, as well as more effective writing of literature essays.

Yin Mei Lenden earned her MEd (Drama) in 2016 from NIE, and has been teaching literature and drama for over 15 years. She is currently Subject Head of Literature and Drama at CHIJ Katong Convent. As a full-time educator and part-time art maker, Yin Mei explores mythic retelling and regeneration in both her academic research and aerial theatre work.

A two-time winner of the T:>Works 24 Hour Playwriting Competition, she performed her 2019 winning play, Green Leaves, an aerial silks theatre piece, as part of T:>Works' triple bill, How to Break a Window earlier this year.

The Situation: A Reading-Writing Gap

With the right texts, students are often able to dive right in, experience the story, and appreciate the various aspects of style to interpret the theme of the literary text. Yet we found that there was a gap when it came to responding through writing, especially at the upper secondary level.

Rather than engage with the essay question as a springboard for analysis and synthesis of a text studied, students would rely on information taught in class or interpretations gathered, and unthinkingly deposit them into the response writing with little regard for the question demands. These students were not necessarily aware of their process of response writing, and hence were unable to diagnose or address the problems in their writing.

While we were already implementing the three key processes of learning as part of the feedback cycle—ensuring learners know where they are in their learning right now (feedback), showing where learners are going (feed-up), and helping them find out how to get there (feed-forward)—we realised that there was still a gap.

Dylan William has identified how most effective learners are self-regulating and that training students in metacognition raises their performance[1]. Since metacognition includes knowing what one knows (meta-cognitive knowledge), what one can do (metacognitive skills), and what one knows about one's own cognitive abilities (metacognitive experience), we needed to clarify and share learning intentions and the criteria for success in terms of student action to make visible to students and teachers how learners were to analyse and evaluate texts, and respond to them in writing. In this manner, we could nurture student assessment literacy for students to be the owners of their own learning.

By unpacking two main skills of literature: analysis and evaluation, and responding through writing, to develop learning intentions, we can guide students in analysing a text before communicating their analysis in an essay.

This guidance not only makes the reading-writing connection clear but also enables students to have a progression map of the learning they are to attain, supporting students' assessment literacy and ability to self-assess.

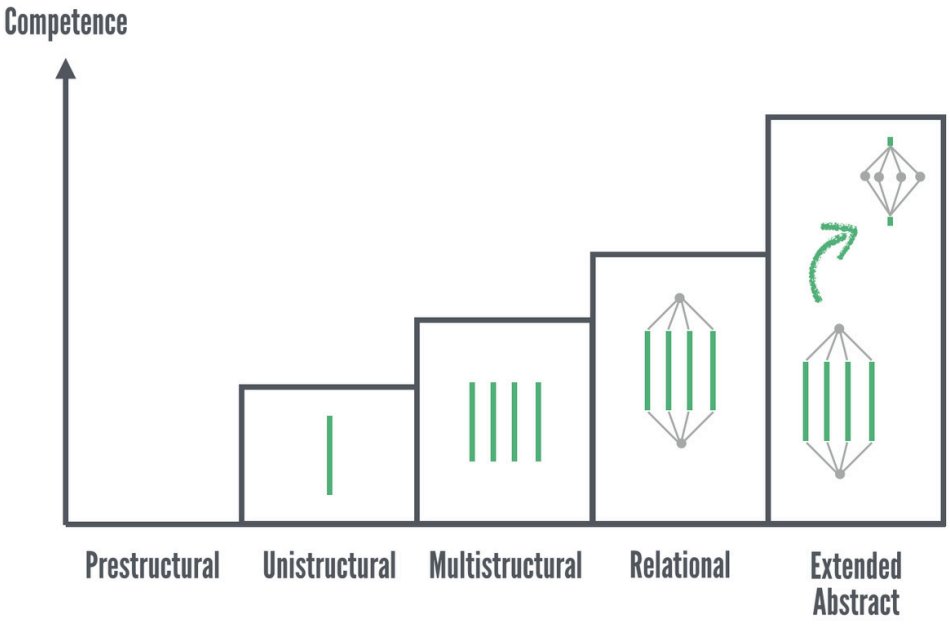

Figure 1: SOLO Taxonomy

Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes

The Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy was devised by John Biggs and Kevin Collis in Evaluating the Quality of Learning: The SOLO Taxonomy (New York: Academic Press, 1982) as a method to make learning outcomes visible to teachers and students. By identifying the level of cognitive complexity of a learning intention and outcome, SOLO taxonomy guides students in the concrete actions they may take to achieve greater progression and success which is helpful in implementing constructive alignment.

Prestructural	Learning outcomes show unconnected information, no organisation.
Unistructural	Learning outcomes show simple connections but the importance is not noted.
Multistructural	Learning outcomes show connections are made, but significance to overall meaning is missing.
Relational	Learning outcomes show full connections made, and synthesis of parts of the overall meaning.
Extended Abstract	Learning outcomes go beyond subject and make links to other concepts - generalises.

Pam Hook describes the five levels of student understanding[2]:

> "At the **prestructural level** of understanding, the student attacks the task inappropriately; they may collect information but it has no organisation or connection and may be irrelevant. It may be that they have missed the point or need help to start…
>
> The next two levels, unistructural and multistructural, are associated with bringing in information. At the **unistructural level**, the student picks up one aspect of the task and their understanding is disconnected and limited…
>
> The jump to the **multistructural level** is quantitative. At the multistructural level, the student knows several aspects of the task but misses their relationships to each other and the whole…
>
> The progression to relational and extended abstract outcomes is qualitative. At the **relational level**, the student links and integrates the aspects, which contribute to a coherent understanding of the whole…
>
> At the **extended abstract** level, the student rethinks their new understanding at the relational level, looks at it in a new way, and uses it as the basis for prediction, generalisation, reflection or creation of new understanding."

By making the learning outcomes visible through identifying the level of cognitive complexity of a learning intention and outcome (Biggs 1999, p 37) from surface, to deep, to conceptual understanding, a common understanding of learning outcomes is created. This not only assists students in recognising the actions they need to take in acts of analysis and responding, but also facilitates sharper and more effective feedback conversations.

Applying the Taxonomy to Literature Learning

We began with the area of analysis and evaluation of a text to SOLO analyse and create a taxonomy of learning which we extended to an assessment task, and furthered to break down the skill set of responding through writing as an extension of the analysis and evaluation phase.

We wanted students to be able to formulate interpretations and themes through an analysis of how plot and structure, character and relationship, setting and atmosphere, and literary devices and conventions, synthesise to create meaning (KSD 3.1) and used the five levels of understanding to determine this might be developed as seen in Table 1.

We refined this general taxonomy for use in the 3N classroom to guide student analysis of text as seen in Example 1 and developed it further as a passage-based question assessment task to ensure that students were guided to practise acts of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation when encountering a PBQ (Example 2).

In doing so, we found that students had more thorough, coherent, and sound annotations, analysis, and interpretations since we had not only provided them with the purpose of their actions but also the autonomy to respond to their own writing in self-assessment tasks. Hence when we moved on to response writing, we drew connections from their analysis and evaluation SOLO taxonomies to develop the responding to writing SOLO taxonomy as seen in Example 3.

Prestructural	Learning outcomes show unconnected information, no organisation.	*Unable to identify ideas, images, and issues throughout the text.*
Unistructural	Learning outcomes show simple connections but the importance is not noted.	*Identify isolated ideas, images, and issues in the text.*
Multistructural	Learning outcomes show connections are made, but significance to overall meaning is missing.	*Identify recurring ideas, images, and issues throughout the text.*
Relational	Learning outcomes show full connections made, and synthesis of parts of the overall meaning.	*Analyse how plot & structure, character & relationship, setting & atmosphere, and literary devices & conventions, synthesise to create meaning*
Extended Abstract	Learning outcomes go beyond subject and make links to other concepts - generalises.	*Identify and articulate the main themes of the text*

Table 1: SOLO Taxonomy in KSD 3.1

Conclusion

In the course of developing these taxonomies, we engaged with student samplers as a means to determine what the cognitive understanding of each level was. Moving forward, we would be able to refine our taxonomies as well as assist students with creating their own feed up steps by introducing target verbs for each cognitive level. This would also allow for the scope for differentiation of instruction in heterogeneous classes.

Through the provision of progression maps of literature learning, the use of SOLO taxonomies in our classrooms has supported our students in formulating independent analysis of their texts as well as in more effective writing of literature essays.

Ultimately, we see students who are more self-regulated, confident and adept in their reading to writing connection.

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Example 1: S3N General Analysis & Evaluation of SOLO Rubrics for Class

Student Learning Outcome	SOLO Level		Band / Mark	Learning Intentions	Analysis	Evaluation
LO2 Appreciating Writer's Craft, Plot, Character, Setting and Atmosphere across Areas of Study LO3.1 Interpreting Theme	Prestructural	Learning outcomes show unconnected information, no organisation.	1 0-4	*Unable to identify ideas, images, and issues throughout the text.*	I am unable to identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study.	
	Unistructural	Learning outcomes show simple connections but importance is not noted.	2 5-8	*Identify ideas, images, and issues throughout the text.*	I can identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study.	
	Multistructural	Learning outcomes show connections are made, but significance to overall meaning is missing.	3 9-11	*Identify recurring ideas, images, and issues throughout the text.*	I can group similar illustrations from A SINGLE Area of Study (Character / Setting / Plot)	OR articulate effect AND / OR affect for A SINGLE piece of illustration
	Relational	Learning outcomes show full connections made, and synthesis of parts to the overall meaning	4 12-14	*Analyse how plot & structure, character & relationship, setting & atmosphere, and literary devices & conventions, synthesise to create meaning.*	I can group similar illustrations from A SINGLE Area of Study (Character / Setting / Plot)	AND articulate effect AND / OR affect for A SINGLE area
			5 15-17		I can group similar illustrations from SOME Areas of Study (Character / Setting / Plot)	AND articulate effect OR affect for SOME areas
			6 18-20		I can group similar illustrations from MOST Areas of Study (Character / Setting / Plot)	AND articulate effect AND affect across MOST areas
	Extended Abstract	Learning outcomes go beyond subject and makes links to other concepts- generalises	7 21-25	Identify and articulate the main themes of the text.	I can make a statement about the message of the story / intention of the writer based on my analysis of the Areas of Study.	AND / OR I can connect the issues of the text with my knowledge of the world.

Student Learning Outcome: LO2.3 Appreciating Character							
Task		**SOLO Level**	**Band / Mark**	**Learning Intention**	**Observations**	**Analysis**	**Evaluation**
Task 1: Observation *Highlight significant areas of study related to Varma and Rakesh in the passage above and annotate their significance.*		Prestructural	**1** 0-6	*Unable to identify ideas and images throughout the text.*	I identify illustrations from the areas of study without relevance to the task.	nil	nil
		Unistructural	**2** 7-10	*Identify ideas and images throughout the text.*	I can identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study (character) by highlighting only.	nil	nil
			3 11-12		I can identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study (character) by highlighting and annotating their significance.	nil	nil
Task 2: Analysis & Evaluation: *Making reference to Task 1, group your illustrations to articulate the effect and affect of the clustered illustrations*	for impressions of Varma	Relational	**4** 13-14	*Identify recurring ideas, images, and issues throughout the text.*	I can identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study (character) by highlighting and annotating their significance.	I can group similar illustrations from A SINGLE Area of Study (Varma's character) across the passage	OR articulate effect (impression of Varma) AND / OR affect for A SINGLE piece of illustration
			5 15-17				AND articulate effect (impression of Varma) AND / OR affect for **A SINGLE area**
	for impressions of Rakesh **and** Varma		**6** 18-20		I can identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study (character) by highlighting and annotating their significance.	I can form **two** groups of similar illustrations from A SINGLE Area of Study (Varma's character & Rakesh's character) across the passage	AND articulate effect (impression of Rakesh and Varma) AND / OR affect for A SINGLE area
	for impressions of Rakesh and Varma 's **relationship**	Extended Abstract	**7** 21-25	Analyse how plot & structure, character & relationship, setting & atmosphere, and literary devices & conventions, synthesise to create meaning.	I can identify relevant illustrations from the areas of study (character) by highlighting and annotating their significance.	I can form **more than two** groups of similar illustrations from A SINGLE Area of Study (Varma's character & Rakesh's character) OR from SOME Areas of Study (Character / Setting / Plot) across the passage	AND articulate effect (impression of the relationship) OR affect for SOME areas

Example 2: S3N Assessment 1 for Analysis & Evaluation

What is your impression of Rakesh and Varma's relationship?

So there he sat, like some stiff corpse, terrified, gazing out on the lawn where his grandsons played cricket, in danger of getting one of their hard-spun balls in his eye, and at the gate that opened onto the dusty and rubbish-heaped lane but still bore, proudly, a newly touched-up signboard that bore his son's name and qualifications, his own name having vanished from the gate long ago.

At last the sky-blue Ambassador arrived, the cricket game broke up in haste, the car drove in smartly and the doctor, the great doctor, all in white, stepped out. Someone ran up to take his bag from him, others to escort him up the steps. "Will you have tea?" his wife called, turning down the transistor set. "Or a Coca-Cola? Shall I fry you some samosas?" But he did not reply or even glance in her direction. Ever a devoted son, he went first to the corner where his father sat gazing, stricken, at some undefined spot in the dusty yellow air that swam before him. He did not turn his head to look at his son. But he stopped gobbling air with his uncontrolled lips and set his jaw as hard as a sick and very old man could set it.

"Papa," his son said, tenderly, sitting down on the edge of the bed and reaching out to press his feet.

Old Varma tucked his feet under him, out of the way, and continued to gaze stubbornly into the yellow air of the summer evening.

"Papa, I'm home."

Varma's hand jerked suddenly, in a sharp, derisive movement, but he did not speak.

"How are you feeling, papa?"

Then Varma turned and looked at his son. His face was so out of control and all in pieces, that the multitude of expressions that crossed it could not make up a whole and convey to the famous man exactly what his father thought of him, his skill, his art.

"I'm dying," he croaked. "Let me die, I tell you."

"Papa, you're joking," his son smiled at him, lovingly. "I've brought you a new tonic to make you feel better. You must take it, it will make you feel stronger again. Here it is. Promise me you will take it regularly, papa."

Varma's mouth worked as hard as though he still had a gob of betel in it (his supply of betel had been cut off years ago). Then he spat out some words, as sharp and bitter as poison, into his son's face. "Keep your tonic—I want none—I want none—I won't take any more of—of your medicines. None. Never," and he swept the bottle out of his son's hand with a wave of his own, suddenly grand, suddenly effective.

His son jumped, for the bottle was smashed and thick brown syrup had splashed up, staining his white trousers. His wife let out a cry and came running. All around the old man was hubbub once again, noise, attention.

He gave one push to the pillows at his back and dislodged them so he could sink down on his back, quite flat again. He closed his eyes and pointed his chin at the ceiling, like some dire prophet, groaning, "God is calling me—now let me go."

Example 3: S3N Assessment 2 for Responding through Writing

What makes you sympathise with either Boon or Jeremiah and the corpse?

Student Learning Outcome	**SOLO Level**	**Band / Mark**	**LO1: articulate the main concerns for arguments presented POINT & ELABORATION**		**LO2: develop ideas effectively through elaboration COMMENT**	**LO3: substantiate responses through judicious selection of textual evidence ILLUSTRATION**
LO4.2 Consolidating and communicating sensitive and informed personal responses	Prestructural	**1** 0-11	I do not answer the question directly with a stand AND I do not give reasons for my sympathy.		I do not cluster illustration AND I do not explain how the illustration creates sympathy for the characters	I narrate text that is not relevant to the question at all OR I do not include information from the text.
	Unistructural	**2** 12-14	I answer the question with a stand OR reasons for my sympathy.		I cluster illustration OR I explain how the illustration creates sympathy for the characters	I include information from the text without stating / understanding its significance.
	Multistructural	**3** 15-17	I answer the question directly with a stand AND I support my stand with one or two reasons for sympathy.		I attempt to analyse and evaluate text by clustering illustration AND Explaining how they create sympathy But I am not always successful.	I include textual evidence that is generally relevant. My textual evidence is sometimes generalised / not always specific.
	Relational	**4** 18-20	I answer the question directly by giving more than two reasons for sympathy.	I explain the significance of the audience's sympathy for the character.	I successfully analyse and evaluate text by clustering illustration AND Explaining how they create sympathy.	I substantiate my response with appropriate selection of textual evidence. My selection of textual evidence is sometimes irrelevant or generalised.
	Extended Abstract	**5** 21-25	I answer the question directly with either reasons for sympathy have contrast or emphasis OR with an overarching argument.	I explain the significance of the audience's sympathy for the character AND link it to theme.	I successfully analyse and evaluate text by clustering illustration AND Explaining how they create sympathy. I explain how theme is conveyed through writer's choices.	I substantiate my response with an apt selection of textual evidence.

LEARNING POETRY BY HEART

by Ow Yeong Wai Kit (NIE)

Ow Yeong Wai Kit advocates for the seemingly outdated practice of poetry memorisation, incorporating elements from the science of learning to promote the relevance of learning poetry by heart while offering specific strategies for the Literature classroom.

Ow Yeong Wai Kit (PGDE, 2015) is currently a PhD candidate at the National Institute of Education. Previously, he taught Literature and English at Bukit Batok Secondary School, and served as an Academy Officer at the Academy of Singapore Teachers.

Learning Poetry by Heart: Why and How?

Can your students recite a poem—any poem—by heart? I know that for many of my own students, the only verse they can recite is the national pledge. (Quite a few can recite BTS song lyrics though!) When I was teaching Secondary Three classes, I would hold a mini-competition for my students: if they memorised a poem (of their choice) during the June holidays and recited it in full for the whole class, I would award them with generous Kinokuniya bookshop vouchers. A few of my students took up the challenge and recited their favourite poem in front of the rest of the class, before sharing why they chose it and what it meant to them. It was a fun and engaging lesson starter activity that allowed students to deepen their familiarity with poetry while building their own confidence in performing for their peers.

Isn't poetry memorisation outdated and irrelevant?

Today, learning poetry by heart seems like a relic from a bygone age. Now that we can access the full text of any poem on demand almost instantly, just at a click of a button on our smartphones and other devices, the notion of enshrining a selection of verse in our headspace appears at first glance to be quaintly redundant. Furthermore, during Literature lessons today, students would never be memorising or reciting. Rather, they would be analysing the

poem as a printed text on the page, circling keywords, and underlining metaphors and images, before attempting an interpretation of the poet's intended effects. Contemporary literary criticism, influenced by the New Critics, emphasises a focus on dissecting texts rather than appreciating them in context, generally excluding any performance-based activities that demand memorisation and recitation.

Yet, approaching poetry in this critical manner is arguably an historical outlier (Shiner, 2021). The origins of poetry stem from oral culture: as an ancient practice, learning poetry by heart was a tried-and-tested feature of classical education in almost all societies since antiquity—memorised poems were also popular amongst the masses and not just the elites (Shiner, 2021).

Learning poetry by heart has further experienced a revival in recent years, as observable from national competitions for students to memorise and recite poetry, such as Poetry Out Loud (US), Poetry in Voice (Canada), and Poetry by Heart (UK), all of which have been highly popular amongst students.

Similarly heartfelt invocations about poetry memorisation have regularly graced the pages of the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, and the *Guardian* (Fassler, 2017; Holt, 2009; Leithauser, 2013; Patterson, 2016; Sleigh, 2007; Worthen, 2017), as well as in the *Straits Times* (Chow, 2021; Toh, 2021). Each successive burst of exuberance for a return to the practice seems to have tapped into what Catherine Robson (2012) has described as "a wellspring of passionate remembrance" (p. 2).

Contemporary scholarship has become more cognisant of the benefits of such classical approaches.

For one, as scholars such as those working on the Cambridge Poetry and Memory Project have found, the practices of memorisation and recitation play a special and important function for the full appreciation of poetry (Pullinger & Whitley, 2016, 2017). As researchers argue, the science of learning illuminates the purpose and relevance of poetry memorisation, because memory work allows students to transcend mere analysis on an intellectual level, by activating bodily, cognitive, and emotional dimensions (Jaques & Whitley, 2022; Pullinger & Whitley, 2017).

Why should students learn poetry by heart?

Promotes a sense of ownership.
As scholar Debbie Pullinger argues, memorised poetry enables "a strong sense of ownership" (2012, p. 389) that promotes intellectual enrichment and appreciation.

When students can recite a poem, they become more deeply invested in the individual words and rhythms of the text, not just because they have taken the time and effort to commit it to memory, but also because they can take possession of the poet's voice more readily. In turn, the poem also possesses students' imaginative landscapes, surfacing depths of meaning, including associations and connotations, that would otherwise go unnoticed.

This sense of ownership is not just intellectual but corporeal—it aligns not just with the mind but the body. When voicing verse aloud from memory, the poem's rhythms and metre are directly experienced in the body, with the ear attuned to the flow of each breath with every line (Pullinger, 2017).

Plant seeds of lifelong appreciation.
Such familiarity with poetry entails that students' comprehension and appreciation of the text can deepen over time, with poems learnt in childhood often uncovering their full significance only during adulthood, in retrospect, after the accumulation of sufficient life experience.

The writer Nick Seddon, for instance, once decided to memorise a hundred poems in a year, discovering that "memorising revives things that have become stale or deadened"—learning Shakespeare's sonnets by heart, for instance, allowed the verse to "unfurl and display their self-delighting inventiveness: time and again, walking down the street, I have little insights and epiphanies" (Seddon, 2006).

Provide emotional consolation.
We never know when we might just need a poem as a source of comfort during difficult times, or just as a means of making sense of life. As Catherine Robson puts it, "When everything else has been taken from you, a memorised poem remains." (2012b, p. 2). Consider the example of Nelson Mandela, who drew upon his memory of W.E. Henley's poem 'Invictus' to sustain him during 27 years of captivity. Even though our students are unlikely to find themselves in such extreme situations, poetry reminds us that we are always connected

with minds beyond the self—when reciting, we are never alone.

How does the science of learning help us understand the relevance of learning poetry by heart?

Learning poetry by heart aids accessibility and retrieval.
Based on cognitive load theory in the learning sciences, long-term memory is fundamental for all mental processes (Russell, 2019). It is crucial for knowledge to be stored in long-term memory because it cannot be outsourced.

We cannot depend on Google for information because of the limited capacity of working memory, which can only hold three to seven new pieces of information at a time (Christodoulou, 2014, p. 63). The act of searching for a poem (or any other information) online occupies space in working memory, subtly hindering the process of decoding new data (Pullinger, 2017). This is also the reason why, in mathematics, students need to memorise times tables. Once committed to long-term memory, knowledge becomes the springboard for multiple applications and durable learning (Wormeli, 2018, p. 37).

Similarly, Literature teachers often advise students sitting for an open-book examination to learn key quotations by heart nevertheless, because they can then avoid wasting time searching for easily memorisable material during the examination itself.

When we access a poem from long-term memory, our working memory becomes freed up—it becomes available to engage in tasks other than decoding print, which would otherwise have taken time and effort for cognitive processing (Pullinger & Whitley, 2017, p. 36).

This is why, as a leading expert in the learning sciences advises, memorisation still matters even in a world where we can look things up (Wormeli, 2018, p. 31).

What happens if students eventually forget the poem? Wouldn't all the effort to memorise poetry be for nothing?

Research from the science of learning suggests that memory loss often involves issues of retrieval instead of storage, in the sense that individuals often reveal retention of information in their long-term memory even if they are unable to recall it immediately (Foster, 2009).

Students may be able to recall the poem when provided cues or through reencounters that allow for recognition.

Significantly, as Pullinger (2012) points out, even if the memory of poems has deteriorated, the underlying images, structures, as well as cadences and rhythms may still remain subconsciously retained (p. 388).

Given that our brain is dominated by thought processes that govern decision-making, conscious explicit access is not always necessary for the mind to trigger connections and insights possible only through imprints left in long term memory (Pullinger, 2012; Wormeli, 2018).

How should we encourage students to learn poetry by heart?

The stereotype of 'rote-learning'—involving a superficial, mechanical process of parroting the form instead of the meaning of the poem—is not the only way to learn it (Pullinger & Whitley, 2017).

There are multiple ways to memorise poems, and the process of learning by heart can be rewarding in itself. Classical techniques such as those used by the ancient Greeks include the 'memory palace', in which content items are situated at specific sites within a visualisation of a familiar location, or the Greek system of connecting vivid mental images, as advocated by Ted Hughes (1997).

But even without such techniques, the poems' own inherent mnemonic potential can be activated: just as W.H. Auden famously defined poetry as "memorable speech", we can encourage students to pay attention to all the sensory aspects of a poem, including its sounds and the bodily sensations it triggers when actively voiced and dramatised.

Studies on memory indicate that, in general, individuals tend to recall information more easily when they are intentional in learning, paying close attention, and drawing personal associations that have direct relevance to their daily lives (Foster, 2009).

As teachers, we can support students in finding poems that they personally enjoy, and then proceed to challenge them through frequent questioning to promote recall. Rick Wormeli (2018) offers a useful series of suggested memorisation strategies, including the following:

1. Practise reciting lines while standing in front of family or friends, and at every waiting time in your life, such as in a queue or when taking public transport (for frequent recall).

2. After practising the lines for a while, do something else (this allows for interleaved practice and spaced retrieval).

3. Move about a lot (this taps on embodied learning approaches).

4. Express the lines through different media, such as by writing them out, or in the form of a song (this taps on multiple neural pathways and sensory channels to reinforce learning).

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Here's seeking your inputs for an NIE/NTU research study on learning poetry by heart!

Check out the poster on the next page and access this link: **https://for.edu.sg/learningpoetrybyheartstudy**

The closing date of the survey is 7 August 2023.

Thank you!

Learning by Heart: The Art and Science of the Memorised Poem in English in Singapore Classrooms

The purpose of this research is to investigate the history and practice of learning poetry in English by heart in Singapore classrooms. This project aims to explore contemporary attitudes and assumptions about poetry memorisation in Singaporean contexts.

Criteria

- Above 21 years of age
- Have experience learning poetry in English
- Studied in Singapore schools

Task

- To complete an online survey about experiences of learning poetry in English
- Additional survey segment for teachers and former teachers of poetry in English
- The entire survey will take around 10-15 minutes, or depending on how long participants' responses are

Significance

- This study would help participants to reflect on their own experiences.
- The findings of this study will also help to improve the teaching and learning of poetry in the classroom, and suggest recommendations to make the study of poetry more effective and enjoyable.

Scan the QR code to take the survey!

If you have any queries about the study, please contact:

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Should you have questions on participants' rights in the study, please contact:

NTU-Institutional Review Board (NTU-IRB)
Tel: 6592 2495
Email: IRB@ntu.edu.sg

IRB No.: IRB-2022-426

MAKING SHAKESPEARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

by Nicole Kang and Afiqah Zamri (Raffles Institution)

Photo by Matt Riches on Unsplash

Nicole Kang studied English Literature at the National University of Singapore and is currently writing her Masters dissertation at NIE. She has been teaching Literature at Raffles Institution for the past 7 years.

Afiqah Zamri studied English Literature at the National University of Singapore and graduated from the NIE PGDE programme in 2016. She is currently teaching English Literature at Raffles Institution.

Nicole Kang and Afiqah Zamri highlight the cognitive demands on working memory load that inhibits students' understanding of Shakespeare. They share the key principles they considered when producing an annotated and translated text of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for students.

In "Accessible, Illuminating and Inclusive Value-added Shakespeare Teaching and Facilitating Macbeth Learning in Singapore", Angus Whitehead (2020) argues that we should continue to expose all students in Singapore, "regardless of class, gender, culture or race" to Shakespeare's texts, considering Shakespeare's status as a "prominent global writer" and because exposure to Shakespeare in the classroom would "considerably enhance students' cultural literacy" (ibid).

While there are increasingly more Singaporean texts included in the 'O' Level set text list (as well as lower secondary text lists), Shakespeare's works continue to be a mainstay in many secondary schools as there are many learning and teaching resources on the Bard available online. However, as most secondary school students (and arguably, junior college students as well) are novice readers of Shakespeare, they tend to struggle with understanding the language and background of the plays, which can often leave students defeated and teachers frustrated.

Most students struggle with Shakespeare as their cognitive load and working memory are too overworked, because they have little knowledge on how to navigate Shakespearean language. Sweller's guidance fading effect posits

that as much as possible, "[s]tudents should initially be given lots of explicit guidance to reduce their working memory load, which assists in transferring knowledge to LTM (long-term memory)" (Sweller, Ayres & Kalyuga, 2011). If we were to apply Sweller's guidance fading effect in the Literature classroom, attempts to decipher Shakespeare's language is too cognitively demanding for local students and makes it difficult for learning to take place as students struggle with the language.

To reduce our students' working memory load in the Literature class, the Literature teachers in Raffles Institution worked together to produce an annotated and translated text of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for students to use during and outside of lessons in 2020 and we have continued to improve on this 'translated text' by making additions and improvements to the previous edition since. Although students could use commercially-available annotated / translated texts of *Julius Caesar* (i.e. CliffsNotes / York Notes), we have found such resources to be inadequate as they merely provide reductive information of the text and do not get students to fully consider the motifs and themes alongside the text (see Figure 1).

As shown in Figure 1, in our annotated version, we included timely guiding questions that help students to draw connections across the play. Rather than indicating these guiding questions at the beginning or the end of the play, we have featured these questions next to the text to scaffold the reading of the text for students.

Another reason for why the Literature teachers have co-constructed this text is because free online resources have often neglected attention to the dramatic elements of Shakespeare's plays as these online resources do not place sufficient emphasis on the dramatic aspects of staging Shakespeare's plays.

The main principle underpinning our construction of the text is to provide as much explicit guidance to our students as possible so that students are alleviated from the stress of reading Shakespeare.

Act 1
Scene 2

BRUTUS **Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,**
What dangers are you leading me into, Cassius,

That you would have me seek into myself
That you have me perceive a quality of myself

For that which is not in me?
That I do not possess? 65

CASSIUS **Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear.**
Hence, good Brutus, I will tell you.

And since you know you cannot see yourself
Since you are unable to see yourself

So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
I will be the mirror that

Will modestly discover to yourself
Will show you and help you to

That of yourself which you yet know not of.
See your personal qualities that you are not aware of. 70

And be not jealous on me, gentle Brutus,
And do not be suspicious of me, noble Brutus,

Think about it!

3. Cassius uses the motif of ocularity / sight to persuade Brutus to join the conspiracy.

a. Identify another similar moment where the motif of ocularity is used in the play.

b. What is the significance of this motif?

Figure 1: An annotated, scaffolded version of the text to help students draw connections across the play of *Julius Caesar.*

Video 1

Video 2

Watch the two videos and consider the following:

1. Compare the portrayal of Julius Caesar in the two videos. What are your impressions of Julius Caesar? Pay attention to:
   - Caesar's costume and physical position
   - The plebeian's reaction to Caesar
   - Anthony's attitude towards Caesar
   - Caesar's response to the soothsayer
2. Compare the portrayal of Mark Anthony in the two videos. What are your impressions of Mark Anthony's relationship with Julius Caesar? Pay close attention to his costume and his interaction with Caesar.
3. Compare the portrayal of the soothsayer in the two videos. Which soothsayer is more trustworthy and what is the significance of this? Pay close attention to the soothsayer's costume, make-up, and tone.
4. Compare Caesar's dismissal of the ominous warning from the soothsayer. What does this tell us about Caesar?
5. What do you think is the significance of these two extremely different interpretations of Caesar?

Figure 2: A curated series of performances and guiding questions for students to consider the dramatic impact of *Julius Caesar*

In addition, one of our weighted assessments is a dramatic adaptation of *Julius Caesar*. We wanted to have our students watch previous adaptations of the play so that they could be exposed to a variety of performance techniques that they too could adapt for their own productions.

In our 'translated text', we curated a list of extracted performances (of *Julius Caesar*) and included a range of performances with a series of guiding questions to consider the dramatic effectiveness of the performance (Figure 2) as students were not able to appreciate these

Figure 2A: (from top to bottom) Adaptations of *Julius Casear* over the years from the 1953 film classic starring Marlon Brandon to Royal Shakespeare Company's all-black production in 2013, and Donmar Warehouse's all-female portrayal in 2017.

texts on their own without questions to help them unpack these performances. Based on student feedback, we includedg answers to these questions in the following edition of the text (2023) as students indicated that they would like to know the answers to these questions to support them during their revision as well.

Furthermore, the Literature teachers curated a range of performances from various adaptations – like the Royal Shakespeare Company's all-black production in 2013 to Donmar Warehouse's all-female production in 2017 (Figure 3). We intentionally included a range of performances as we also wanted students to consider the universality/timelessness of Shakespeare's play through the various contexts in which the play has been performed and adapted. This also meets the objectives of our weighted assessments as students are required to adapt *Julius Caesar* to a different context (using their own script).

While this resource may seem a time-consuming endeavour for teachers, the feedback we have received from students and teachers about this text has been positive as it aligns not only with our assessment objectives but also our curricular objectives for students to gain a deeper appreciation of Shakespeare's work. The main principle underpinning our construction of the text is to provide as much explicit guidance to our students as possible so that students are alleviated from the stress of reading Shakespeare. In turn, it also means that teachers can avoid taking up valuable curriculum time in 'translating' the text during the lessons.

Video 3

Consider these questions

1. In the dramatisation of this scene in the video, Julius Caesar makes public her displeasure of Cassius. (This is different from how Shakespeare intended for this scene to be a private moment between Caesar and Antony). Why do you think the director has chosen this particular staging of this scene in the play?
2. While Caesar talks about Cassius, the plebeians are in the background eating (00:49). How does this further enhance Caesar's derision towrds Cassius in this scene?
3. In this dramatisation, Julius Caesar circles Cassius. What is the dramatic effect evoked here? (Consider how we feel towards Cassius in this scene.)
4. At the end of the scene, Caesar brings Cassius to the middle of the stage and forces her to sit down and force feeds her food. Consider the dramatic effect of doing this in terms of:
   - How audiences are made to feel towards Caesar.
   - How audience are made to feel towards Cassius and her cause

Figure 3: An all-female production of *Julius Caesar* and guiding questions for students to consider the universality of Shakespeare's plays.

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DESIGNING INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

HISTORY AND LITERARY ARTS IN ACTION




by Lloyd Yeo (AST), Kang Wei Yang and Lucas Ho (SOTA) and Ow Yeong Wai Kit (NIE)

The History and Literature Interdisciplinary Networked Learning Community (NLC) outlines their interdisciplinary collaboration project, delving into a lesson unit based on a 'historical' poem about colonial abuses of Asian labour in 19th-century Singapore.

Lloyd Yeo is a Master Teacher at the Academy of Singapore Teachers. Kang Wei Yang and Lucas Ho teach History and Literary Arts respectively at the School of the Arts (SOTA). Ow Yeong Wai Kit is a PhD candidate in the English Language and Literature Academic Group at NIE.

What do *Hamilton* and Singapore poetry have in common? This boundary-crossing project in the History and Literature Interdisciplinary Networked Learning Community (NLC) aims to explore how the concepts of boundary crossings and boundary objectives in Activity Theory have been used to design an interdisciplinary learning unit.

What's our project about?

Between July to August 2021, teachers from SOTA and AST implemented an interdisciplinary project aimed at investing the following aspects of interdisciplinary learning:

- **RQ1**: Teacher level — Explore how teachers collaborated to put together an interdisciplinary learning unit to integrate history and literary arts
- **RQ2**: Student level — Investigate the quality of poems produced through a pre-post analysis of student work and student perception on such lessons

Methodology

RQ1: At the teacher level, observations, reflections and semi-structured interviews were carried out to investigate how they collaborated on the interdisciplinary project with Activity Theory used as an approach to identify 'boundary' objects.

RQ2: At the student level, teachers collaborated to design a series of lessons. A pre-post test to analyse the quality of poems was used, followed by a student perception survey.

Findings

RQ1: Importance of Distributed Leadership and Shared Disciplinary Thinking

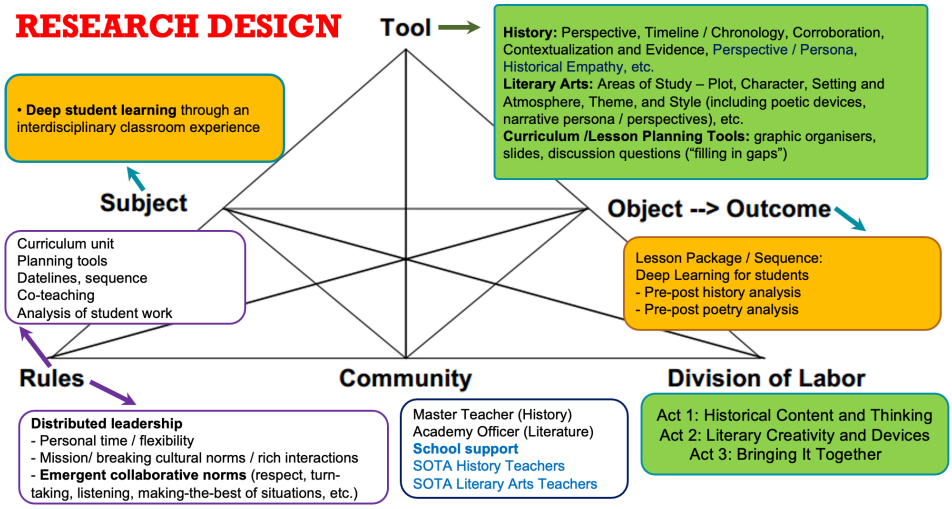


Figure 1: Activity Theory based on analysis of teacher interview

Interviews with teachers revealed the importance of distributed leadership and finding shared disciplinary thinking for effective interdisciplinary learning to be implemented. Equally important was the selection of a piece of poetry which originates from the time period being studied.

Distributed leadership took the form of shared discussions and management on how the lessons could be sequenced based on the curriculum with enduring understandings, disciplinary thinking and an understanding of a poem as a shared object to discuss.

Decision-making on how the lessons progressed were dispersed with the different teacher experts deciding who to take lead at different moments. Emergent collaborative group norms revolved around mutual respect, turn-taking, listening and "making the best" of time constraints and situations to put the series of lessons together.

RQ2: Lesson Design

Our research design comprised five stages:

Stage 1: Introducing the inquiry question: "How can Interdisciplinary learning be used to deepen student learning in history and the arts (poetry)?" The 'hook' lesson took the form of fact-checking 'Hamilton' for historical reliability to spark students' curiosity.

Stage 2: Administering a pre-test to get students to write a poem on migrants, and

conducting a survey on student understanding of how history can be used to study poetry

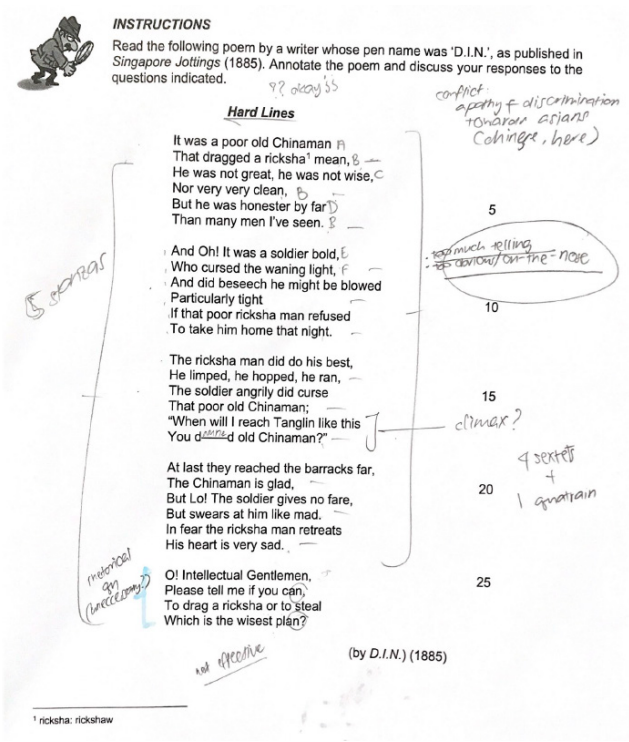
Stage 3: Building historical contextual knowledge about colonial Singapore

Stage 4: Lessons and teacher modelling on (1) how to analyse a chosen poem using literary devices; (2) explicit teaching of historical contextualisation and corroboration

Stage 5: Post-test task on getting students to re-write or edit their previous poetry on migrants, and administering the previous survey instrument to measure impact on students' learning.

The 'Historical' Poem

For our lesson intervention, we applied the same principles of enlivening history to a Singapore text, specifically the poem 'Hard Lines' — written during the colonial period in Singapore, in 1885. In brief, the poem is about a British soldier who abuses a Chinese rickshaw puller — a metaphor for colonial abuses and exploitation of Asian labour — which still bears contemporary relevance.



INSTRUCTIONS

Read the following poem by a writer whose pen name was 'D.I.N.', as published in *Singapore Jottings* (1885). Annotate the poem and discuss your responses to the questions indicated.

Hard Lines

It was a poor old Chinaman
That dragged a ricksha[1] mean,
He was not great, he was not wise,
Nor very very clean,
But he was honester by far
Than many men I've seen.

And Oh! It was a soldier bold,
Who cursed the waning light,
And did beseech he might be blowed
Particularly tight
If that poor ricksha man refused
To take him home that night.

The ricksha man did do his best,
He limped, he hopped, he ran,
The soldier angrily did curse
That poor old Chinaman;
"When will I reach Tanglin like this
You d—d old Chinaman?"

At last they reached the barracks far,
The Chinaman is glad,
But Lo! The soldier gives no fare,
But swears at him like mad.
In fear the ricksha man retreats
His heart is very sad.

O! Intellectual Gentlemen,
Please tell me if you can,
To drag a ricksha or to steal
Which is the wisest plan?

(by *D.I.N.*) (1885)

[1] ricksha: rickshaw

Figure 2: Poem as annotated by students

During this lesson unit, students close-read the poem using a literary lens, exploring aspects like poetic form, diction, structure, like the rhyme scheme, and so on.

It was important that students had the opportunity to appreciate the linguistic and literary aspects of the poem, such as by reading and performing it aloud, and discussing the ethical issues raised by the text.

To structure students' discussions and interpretations, we provided them a graphic organiser to prompt their responses about these literary aspects. These aspects included the subject matter, the language of the poem (including even the significance of the word 'Chinaman', or how the phrase 'hard lines' means tough luck or misfortune), how that contributes to characterisation (like how the character of the soldier and the Chinaman is depicted), as well as structure and sound devices.

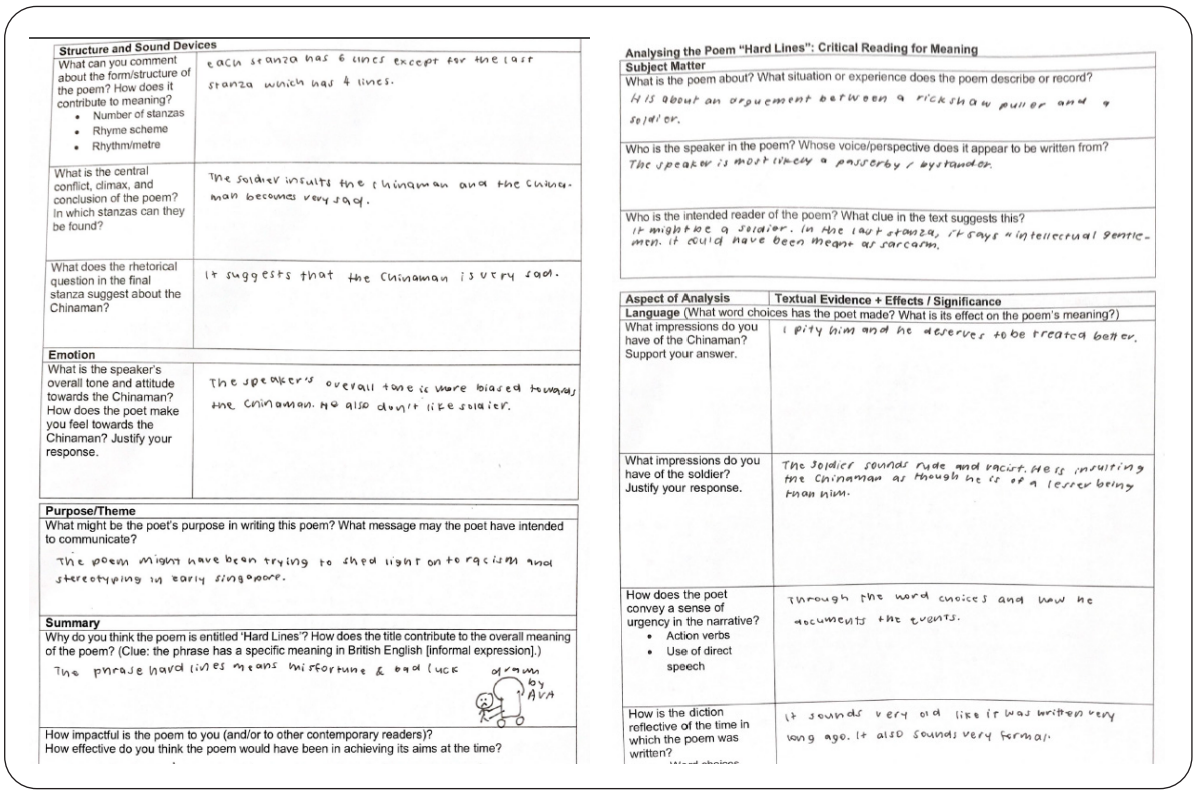
One noteworthy aspect is how the literary lens allows for the ethical dimensions of the poem to be surfaced, in terms of how readers — and by extension, students — are encouraged to empathise with the poor and downtrodden subaltern figure, in this case with the oppressed Chinaman. The personal, emotive responses of students are evident — some even drew their feelings like in this sample of student work.

For the second part of the lesson, students analysed 'Hard Lines' — this time as a historical source, by corroborating and contextualising it.

In what ways can interdisciplinary learning be leveraged in the Literature classroom?

In his opening address at the 9th Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2022, Education Minister Chan Chun Sing described several shifts in the teaching and learning systems which include (1) going beyond the transmission of knowledge to that of sense making; (2) diverse models and methods to meet the diverse learning needs of students; (3) leveraging the strengths of community networks or mobilising "village strength".

We believe that this model of interdisciplinary learning has practical advantages. It helps both teachers and students avoid burn-out when it comes to managing multiple school projects and drives right at the heart of inquiry-based learning. Such approaches also deepen both critical and creative thinking without trivialising the importance of deep disciplinary understanding. They



Structure and Sound Devices

What can you comment about the form/structure of the poem? How does it contribute to meaning? • Number of stanzas • Rhyme scheme • Rhythm/metre	each stanza has 6 lines except for the last stanza which has 4 lines.
What is the central conflict, climax, and conclusion of the poem? In which stanzas can they be found?	The soldier insults the chinaman and the chinaman becomes very sad.
What does the rhetorical question in the final stanza suggest about the Chinaman?	It suggests that the Chinaman is very sad.

Emotion

What is the speaker's overall tone and attitude towards the Chinaman? How does the poet make you feel towards the Chinaman? Justify your response.	The speaker's overall tone is more biased towards the chinaman. He also don't like soldier.

Purpose/Theme

What might be the poet's purpose in writing this poem? What message may the poet have intended to communicate?

The poem might have been trying to shed light on to racism and stereotyping in early singapore.

Summary

Why do you think the poem is entitled 'Hard Lines'? How does the title contribute to the overall meaning of the poem? (Clue: the phrase has a specific meaning in British English [informal expression].)

The phrase hard lines means misfortune & bad luck

How impactful is the poem to you (and/or to other contemporary readers)?
How effective do you think the poem would have been in achieving its aims at the time?

Analysing the Poem "Hard Lines": Critical Reading for Meaning

Subject Matter

What is the poem about? What situation or experience does the poem describe or record?

It is about an arguement between a rickshaw puller and a soldier.

Who is the speaker in the poem? Whose voice/perspective does it appear to be written from?

The speaker is most likely a passerby / bystander.

Who is the intended reader of the poem? What clue in the text suggests this?

It might be a soldier. In the last stanza, it says "intellectual gentlemen. it could have been meant as sarcasm.

Aspect of Analysis	Textual Evidence + Effects / Significance
Language (What word choices has the poet made? What is its effect on the poem's meaning?)	
What impressions do you have of the Chinaman? Support your answer.	I pity him and he deserves to be treated better.
What impressions do you have of the soldier? Justify your response.	The soldier sounds rude and racist. He is insulting the Chinaman as though he is of a lesser being than him.
How does the poet convey a sense of urgency in the narrative? • Action verbs • Use of direct speech	Through the word choices and how he documents the events.
How is the diction reflective of the time in which the poem was written?	It sounds very old like it was written very long ago. It also sounds very formal.

Figure 3A - 3B: Graphic organiser for literary analysis of the poem 'Hard Lines'

Fact Checking 1: Prior Knowledge/ Background knowledge

Group 1: Use your Prior Knowledge/ Background knowledge

Imagine you are two historians trying to figure out if the events in the poem are close to the truth.

As a pair, talk it out. Discuss and put down in point form your answers to the question.

You may refer to the video which was shared in our history class, posted in google classroom

You will later present in class.

(i) What do you both know about rickshaw coolies in colonial Singapore?

(ii) What do you both know about Europeans in colonial Singapore?

(iii) Does the source confirm what you already know? If so how? [similarity]

(iv) Does the source challenge what you already know? If so, what? [difference]

(v) As a historian, Is the poem believable from a historical perspective?

1. I know that rickshaw pullers must work very hard to earn money. Even if they earned money, it wasn't a lot. Their lives were very tough and their only escape from their miserable and agonising life was opium and drugs. This shows that their coping methods were not very healthy and that they had to resort to many unhealthy and unethical things to cope with their workload. Sometimes passengers didn't want to pay the rickshaw coolies.
2. I know that they were very racist towards the Chinese residents, and they did not treat them as equals and as though they were less able and worthy than themselves.
3. Yes, this confirms that life in Singapore back then was not easy and it was not easy to simply survive in Singapore.
4. Yes, it confirms that the soldiers back in the days were very racist and were very unbiased towards the Chinese residents of Singapore. It proves that racism and discrimination existed already in the olden Singapore. Through this we can also infer that the rickshaw pullers had a very sad and miserable life we can also infer through the video as they were pulling very heavy rickshaws and that it was very hard to pull. In the video the rickshaw puller was also pulling a rickshaw with two people sitting on it and running faster than a horse passing by, this proves that it was very hard to do this job.
5. Yes, there was racial prejudice back then too as many Asians weren't educated and poor due to the lack of job choices. And British people are petty and think they are better.

Fact Checking 2: Using Secondary Sources (e.g. your textbook)

Group 2: *Fact Checking 2: Secondary Sources*

Imagine you are two historians trying to figure out if the events in the poem are close to the truth.

As a pair, read these pages from your textbook

- European traders – pp. 141-142
- Labourers – pp. 146
- British attitudes towards locals – p.163

If you want, you can also skim through this site - https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_947_2005-01-25.html

Discuss and put down in point form your answers to the question.

You will later present in class.

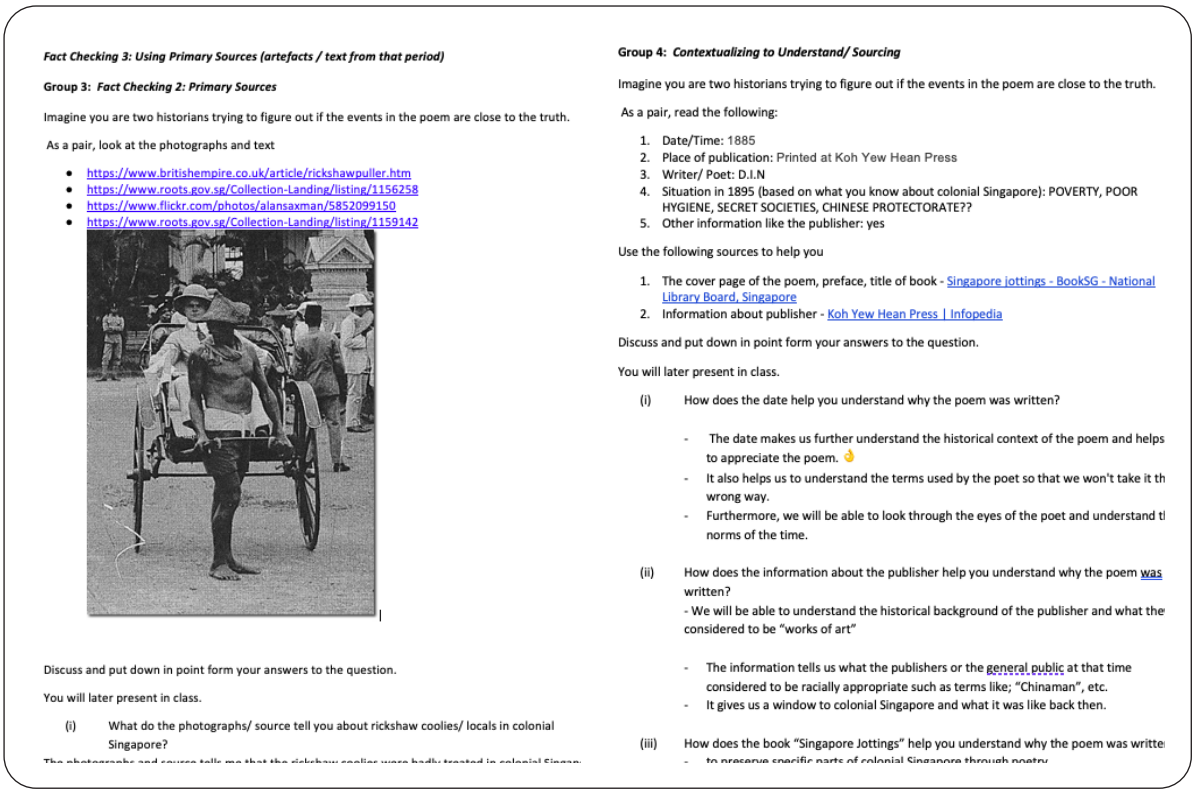
(i) What does the textbook tell you about rickshaw coolies/ locals in colonial Singapore??

- It tells me about their hardships and that it is very common for rickshaw pullers to not get paid. It also told me that a rickshaw puller needed to work many different jobs to earn a living. Some rickshaw pullers are also beaten up or to death by their customers. They also must deal with a language barrier problem as rickshaw pullers are usually Chinese men who only speak Chinese or Chinese dialects and cannot understand English. Some British men even curse at the rickshaw pullers when they are not satisfied with them.

(ii) What does the textbook tell you about Europeans in colonial Singapore?

- Europeans were responsible for setting up agency houses.
- They had difficulty communicating with the Asian traders due to the language barriers
- They got help from the Chinese Peranakans who knew how to speak English, Malay, and Chinese dialects to be translators
- The British rarely treated the Asians with respect
- They believed British culture was superior and they had responsibility with "civilising" those they ruled
- The British made up most of the high-ranking officials in the colonial government
- Well qualified locals were not given important positions in the government
- Most of the Europeans had privileged treatment. For example, Asians were discouraged to travel in the first-class carriages and were not allowed to use hotel facilities such as the dance floor and bar as they were usually reserved solely for Europeans

Figure 4A - 4B: Historical analysis of the poem 'Hard Lines'



Fact Checking 3: Using Primary Sources (artefacts / text from that period)

Group 3: ***Fact Checking 2: Primary Sources***

Imagine you are two historians trying to figure out if the events in the poem are close to the truth.

As a pair, look at the photographs and text

- https://www.britishempire.co.uk/article/rickshawpuller.htm
- https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1156258
- https://www.flickr.com/photos/alansaxman/5852099150
- https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1159142

Discuss and put down in point form your answers to the question.

You will later present in class.

(i) What do the photographs/ source tell you about rickshaw coolies/ locals in colonial Singapore?

Group 4: ***Contextualizing to Understand/ Sourcing***

Imagine you are two historians trying to figure out if the events in the poem are close to the truth.

As a pair, read the following:

1. Date/Time: 1885
2. Place of publication: Printed at Koh Yew Hean Press
3. Writer/ Poet: D.I.N
4. Situation in 1895 (based on what you know about colonial Singapore): POVERTY, POOR HYGIENE, SECRET SOCIETIES, CHINESE PROTECTORATE??
5. Other information like the publisher: yes

Use the following sources to help you

1. The cover page of the poem, preface, title of book - Singapore jottings - BookSG - National Library Board, Singapore
2. Information about publisher - Koh Yew Hean Press | Infopedia

Discuss and put down in point form your answers to the question.

You will later present in class.

(i) How does the date help you understand why the poem was written?

- The date makes us further understand the historical context of the poem and helps to appreciate the poem.
- It also helps us to understand the terms used by the poet so that we won't take it th wrong way.
- Furthermore, we will be able to look through the eyes of the poet and understand tl norms of the time.

(ii) How does the information about the publisher help you understand why the poem was written?

- We will be able to understand the historical background of the publisher and what the considered to be "works of art"

- The information tells us what the publishers or the general public at that time considered to be racially appropriate such as terms like; "Chinaman", etc.
- It gives us a window to colonial Singapore and what it was like back then.

(iii) How does the book "Singapore Jottings" help you understand why the poem was writte

Figure 4C - 4D: Historical analysis of the poem 'Hard Lines'

also empower, embolden and encourage Literature teachers to work together as a community to teach in a creative and refreshing way, for instance by incorporating multimodal text types and working with diverse rich texts.

What are some challenges involved during the project?

Time was a perennial problem which the project team faced. Nevertheless, the support from schools as well as the flexible means through which the team met and worked together in formal and informal ways helped make the project a success. The Shakespearean adage that "many strokes, though with a little axe, [can] hew down and fell the hardest timber'd oak", certainly rang true for our project members.

What are some of the benefits and/or areas for growth?

This action research project demonstrates that interdisciplinary approaches can make learning more engaging. Repeated use of different disciplinary scaffolds can allow students to become more creative meaning-makers in the process of interpreting and constructing texts.

On a final note, what would be our advice to teachers seeking to incorporate such interdisciplinary approaches as part of their classroom repertoire?

Don't be afraid to experiment! Do work with colleagues from other disciplines to explore creative possibilities.

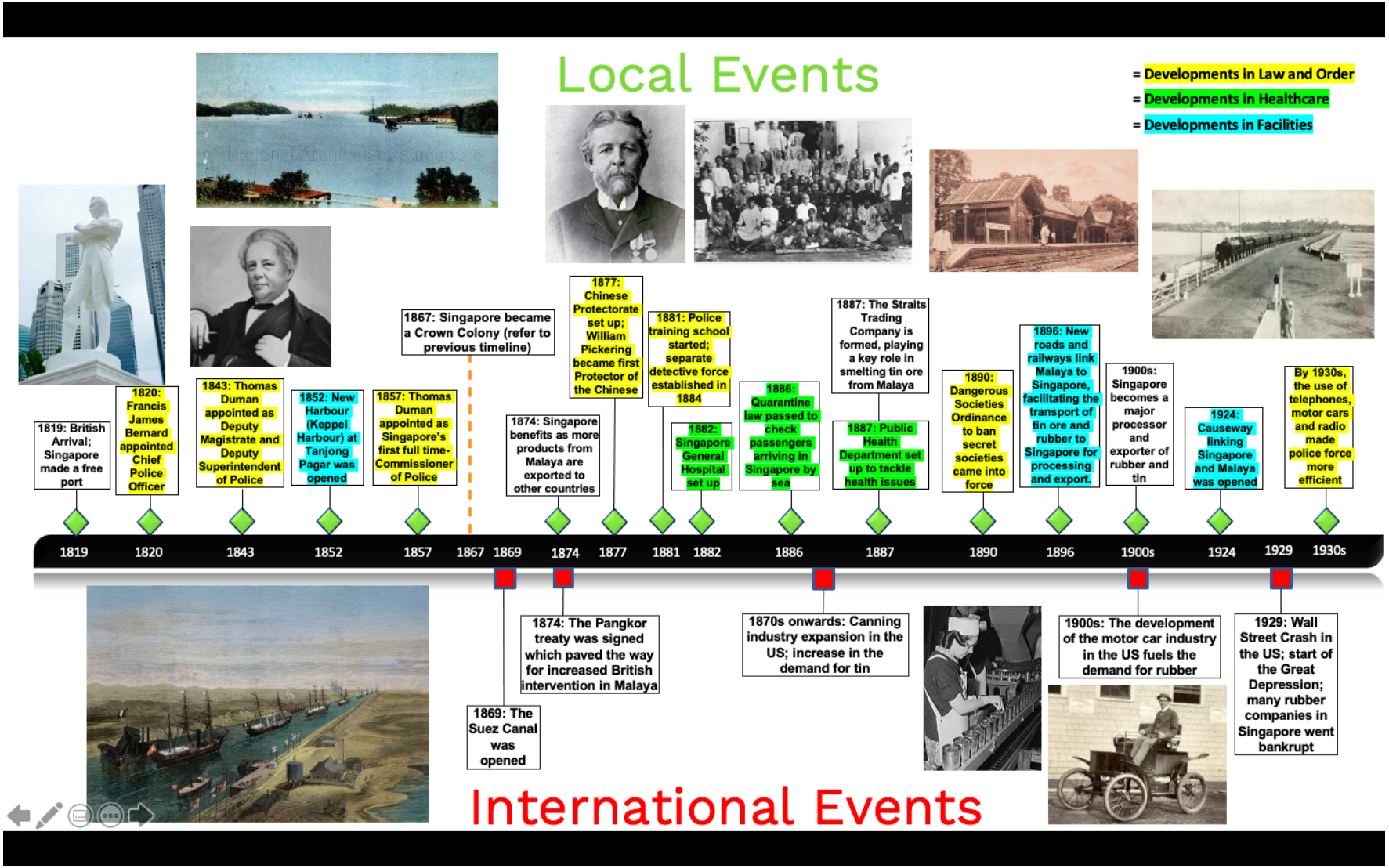


Figure 5: An example of a historical timeline used in class

LITERATURE KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS

A TOOL FOR PLANNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

by Ow Yeong Wai Kit, Kavitha Chandran Desai, Kali Sri Sivanantham, Shaleni Nedumaran, Izzah Hazirah Azmi and Hafizah Beevi

Literature Knowledge Organiser: *Off Centre*

Acts / Scenes	Plot Summary
Prologue	***Vinod*** *speaks to the audience as they enter; he hints that he is somewhat different from them.* ***Saloma*** *speaks only to Vinod before shying away, off-stage.*
Act One Scene One	***Vinod*** *meets* ***Saloma*** *at the Oasis Club and befriends her. His friendliness contrasts with her intense shyness. Saloma is initially reserved but warms up to Vinod.*
Act One Scene Two	***Vinod*** *calls* ***Saloma****; their friendship develops. Saloma mentions Mak and tells Vinod about the voice that she hears. First mention of a 'centre'.*
Act One Scene Three	***Vinod*** *brings* ***Saloma*** *to a restaurant for their three-month anniversary. Saloma breaks down; reveals more about* ***Azman****. Saloma speaks about* ***Emily Gan****. He expounds about God; first mentions their being 'off-centre'. Saloma speaks about Emily Gan.*
Act One Scene Four	***Mak*** *enters* ***Saloma****'s room. Declaring her distrust of medical professionals, Mak advises Saloma to dispose of her medicine. Mak reveals her faith in religion.*
Act Two Scene One	*Flashback to* ***Vinod****'s past at the National University of Singapore. Vinod feels intimidated,* ***Charlie*** *responds with tentativeness towards him,* ***Denise*** *with fear.*
Act Two Scene Two	*Flashback to the halfway house.* ***Saloma*** *has spent three months at Woodbridge. She meets* ***Emily*** *and* ***Nirmala****.* ***Mak*** *visits Saloma.*
Act Two Scene Three	*Three months after Saloma's distressing experience at the restaurant,* ***Vinod*** *and* ***Saloma*** *meet at his void deck. First appearance of* ***Razali****. Saloma and Vinod discuss public opinion about mental patients. Vinod shares about his parents.*
Act Two Scene Four	***Vinod****,* ***Saloma*** *and* ***Razali*** *are featured in this surreal scene. Saloma dreams of writing a letter to correct the public's skewed image of mental patients. Vinod, who is wide awake, contemplates suicide but stops himself. Razali appears as a narrator for Vinod.*
Act Three Scene One	*Flashback to* ***Vinod****'s National Service. Vinod had a nervous breakdown a month before this; now he is permitted to rest in his bunk. The* ***Platoon Commander*** *is harsh towards Vinod, triggering his mental breakdown.*
Act Three Scene Two	*Flashback about* ***Saloma****'s encounter with* ***Azman****. Azman approaches Saloma and lures her into his house. Saloma's simple trust in Azman reveals her guilelessness.*
Act Three Scene Three	*Robbery scene that takes place at the void deck. Interweaving of* ***Vinod****'s and* ***Saloma****'s past and present* ***Robber*** *enters and grabs Saloma. Vinod is unable to protect Saloma; he goes berserk when he hears the trigger phrase "no balls".*
Act Four Scene One	***Emily*** *appears in* ***Vinod****'s dream and censures him for over-rationalising and thinking about giving up. She offers advice to Vinod to give, sympathise and control ("Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata"). The scene foreshadows Emily's death.*
Act Four Scene Two	***Vinod*** *isolates himself away from the world;* ***Saloma*** *is unable to contact Vinod. Saloma finds out from the newspapers about* ***Emily Gan****'s abortion and death.*
Act Four Scene Three	*Three weeks pass, with* ***Vinod*** *continuing to shut out the world.* ***His parents*** *blatantly disregard his feelings, applying on his behalf to several universities. Without Vinod's support,* ***Saloma*** *is forced to be independent. Her encounter with the bird in her room snaps her out of her fear; she has an urge to go out.*
Act Five Scene One	***Vinod*** *becomes distraught when he finds that* ***Saloma*** *has become more independent. They both blame* ***Razali*** *for abandoning them when they need him the most (during the robbery). Vinod completely rejects society and rants about suicide.*
Act Five Scene Two	***Mak*** *and* ***Saloma*** *argue about the latter's efforts to reintegrate into society; Mak opposes Saloma's interest in working, revealing her hardship as her caregiver.*
Act Five Scene Three	***Vinod*** *explains to* ***Saloma*** *why he is against medicine, and that what he needs is love, which he cannot get from his family. Saloma attempts to encourage Vinod, rebuking him for giving up. Vinod flies into a rage, taunting the audience, and taking his anger out on Saloma.*
Act Five Scene Four	***Vinod*** *apologises to* ***Saloma****; she forgives him and tells him that she will accompany him to see the doctor. Vinod expresses deep hurt at what he perceives to be his* ***parents'*** *betrayal for applying to the university. Vinod's inner voice leaves him.*
Act Five Scene Five	*It is now December; it is* ***Vinod****'s and* ***Saloma****'s one-year anniversary. After some cajoling, Vinod accedes to Saloma's request to go to the Oasis Club function. His ominous request to dance with Saloma foreshadows his abrupt departure from the Oasis Club and suicide.*
Epilogue	***Saloma*** *hangs up the phone and walks across the stage, to Vinod's room. She speaks to the audience alone for the very first time. She dares to look at them, and to ask them if they have seen Vinod. Mirroring Vinod in the Prologue, she reassures the audience that they need not fear her because she is normal. Saloma remains on stage as the audience exits.*

Characters	
Vinod	*Suffers from depression; eloquent, idealistic, sensitive; eventually becomes suicidal*
Vinod (Narrator)	*Commentator on Vinod; not always obeyed by Vinod*
Saloma	*Suffers from schizophrenia; initially timid; befriends Vinod; eventually reintegrates into society*
Saloma (Narrator)	*Commentator about Saloma; reflective about her actions; provides her with support*
Mak	*Saloma's mother; religious; resilient; independent.*
Charlie	*Vinod's JC classmate who expresses concern*
Denise	*Vinod's JC classmate; distant and fearful*
Emily	*Patient at halfway house; assertive but shows care*
Nirmala	*Patient at halfway house; juxtaposed with Emily*
Fong	*Army recruit in Vinod's unit; awkward and hesitant*
Mok	*Army sergeant; more understanding compared to PC*
Platoon Commander	*Army Commander/Officer; accuses Vinod of malingering and questions his manhood*
Mr Razali	*Security guard; guardian/father to Saloma and Vinod*
Azman	*Saloma's former neighbour; hints that he abused her*
Mr Chow	*Vinod's ex-boss; only concerned about awards*
Ah Seng	*Worker and former colleague of Vinod; aggrieved*
Robber	*Robs Saloma at the void deck; taunts Vinod*

Motifs / Symbols
Bird / aeroplane / flight
The void deck
Songs / radio dedications
Disconnecting the radio and telephone
Bird cage / prison and window grilles
Dancing
Baby-blue hanger
Mantras
Medicine
Dreams
Oasis Club

Context
Depression *– a mental illness: symptoms include a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities once enjoyed; affects Vinod.*
Schizophrenia *– a mental illness: symptoms include false beliefs, confused thinking, or hearing non-existent voices; affects Saloma.*
Early Morning Awakening *– an inability to get back to sleep after waking up early in the morning; associated with depression; affects Vinod.*
Haresh Sharma *– Singaporean playwright (1965–present); wrote Off Centre (based on research, interviews with patients and others, improvisations with actors, as well as discussions).*
Breaking the fourth wall *– when actors violate the performance convention in which an invisible, imagined wall separates actors from the audience; actors directly acknowledge the audience, as part of the play; shocks the audience into recognising their own role / complicity in the problems presented (e.g. during the prologue, epilogue)*

Themes
Mental Illness
Stigma & Prejudice
Marginalisation & Oppression
Religion & Belief
Independence / Freedom
Power & Authority
Class / Social Hierarchies
Achievement & Success
Coming of Age
Friendship
Parent-Child Relationships
Growth & Transformation

By Ow Yeong Wai Kit and students: https://for.edu.sg/litknowledgesample

Ow Yeong Wai Kit (National Institute of Education) and Kavitha Chandran Desai (Fuhua Secondary School) lead the Literature Knowledge Organisers Networked Learning Community (NLC), whose members comprise: Kali Sri Sivanantham (Bukit Batok Secondary School), Shaleni Nedumaran (Fuchun Secondary School), Izzah Hazirah Azmi (Springfield Secondary School), and Hafizah Beevi (Kent Ridge Secondary School).

The Literature Knowledge Organisers Networked Learning Community (NLC) elaborates on the advantages, challenges, and strategies for teachers to co-construct knowledge organisers, which helps students to consolidate their learning.

Do you find that your students tend to forget details of literary texts, like characters' relationships and plot details? Likewise, batch after batch of our students used to confuse characters' names, themes, symbols, and about every other aspect of their set texts. Hence, we asked ourselves some key questions:

- How do students capture their learning in the literature classroom?
- What knowledge would literature students need to know to excel?
- What prevents literature students from acquiring this knowledge?
- What knowledge would literature teachers need to know to equip students to do well?

- How can we leverage ICT platforms to promote such knowledge acquisition and achieve effective learning outcomes?

As part of a Literature Networked Learning Community (NLC), we sought a tool that would allow students to capture their learning in ways that were more effective than just jotting down notes in their literature journals. We also wanted our students to be able to draw connections between characters and themes, as well as to the wider world around them. They would need to be familiar enough with the details of their texts to be able to elaborate on their answers and justify their responses to questions.

Yet, when lacking in life experiences or exposure to texts, students were often unable to discern patterns and draw relevant conclusions from their texts. In turn, as teachers, we could not assume that our students were familiar with textual details; we had to find creative ways to check their understanding. For planning, teaching, and assessment purposes, we found that Literature knowledge organisers were a useful tool.

What are knowledge organisers?

Essentially, knowledge organisers are a kind of graphic organiser — i.e. summaries no longer than two sides of an A4 page, comprising all the key facts that students need to have basic knowledge and understanding of a topic or text.

How is the use of Literature knowledge organisers aligned with the Science of Learning?

Knowledge organisers constitute a helpful tool for students to establish a rudimentary foundation of knowledge that allows them to conduct independent research. Cognitive science has shown that learning facts builds the foundations for problem-solving and analysis, allowing for complex thought processes that transcend the limited capacity and duration of one's working memory (Smith, 2012). Based on cognitive load theory, a key purpose of instruction is to enable learners to build knowledge in their long-term memory (Sweller et al., 2019). Through the use of such Literature knowledge organisers, students can organise critical information about their texts clearly and explicitly (Fletcher-Wood, 2018).

What are some advantages of using knowledge organisers in the Literature classroom?

Co-creating such organisers helped students to consolidate their understanding of the different areas of study, such as characterisation, setting, and theme. They could also avoid losing track of the sequence of events in the text, as all the key plot points would have been mapped out. As teachers, we could identify learning gaps and follow up on them, while students could self-assess and review their own understanding of the text.

By just modifying the organiser selectively, we found that it could offer a revision timetable, homework, and test of prior knowledge; in sixty seconds, we could devise fun, low-stakes quizzes, for instance by deleting scenes and asking students to recreate the flow of events, or deleting the names of characters, and asking students to map out character relationships or connect significant moments, as suggested by Fletcher-Wood (2018, p. 25).

Using an online digital platform like Google Sheets also promoted collaborative learning, as students could access the organiser easily and update the information accordingly, with and from their peers. Revisiting the organisers after completing a text also enabled richer interpretations and deeper analysis, offering a bird's eye view for review and revision.

What are some key challenges you faced in the process?

Some of our students are not always self-directed, so they required quite a bit of handholding despite teacher-modelling with the class about how the knowledge organiser should be completed. We found that the initial plan of assigning students different chapters, aiming for the entire text's knowledge organiser to be completed by term 1, did not work.

Instead, allocating students chapter by chapter or scene by scene, just the week before the next chapter was to be taught), was more effective. We should start the process of creating knowledge organisers earlier in the year, to allow for more iterations and a longer runway for students to edit their work.

Furthermore, for small classes, students have to take on more individual work, so they may not always be consistent in completing the organisers, which means that they may need constant reminders.

Students may also experience difficulty identifying key significant

events; their summaries may also be rather lengthy, and require extensive editing.

What are some suggested improvements when using such organisers in future?

We could adapt the use of knowledge organisers as part of differentiated instruction (DI) to guide students based on their various areas of strength and their differing needs. We would also aim to model the task of constructing organisers more explicitly, and assign students to work in pairs to reduce the risk of cognitive overload. Students would then be more motivated to conscientiously complete the organisers.

Showing student samples might be useful as well; we could share the work of different levels (e.g. Secondary 3s and 4s) so that students can compare notes and learn from one another's strengths and gaps. We would strive to revisit the knowledge organisers consistently during classes and consultations so that students can recognise the value of using it for revision.

What are your reflections on your overall experience with knowledge organisers?

Literature knowledge organisers have served as a vital learning tool for students, given that the process of creating and using them demands that they review their set text and make sense of it for themselves. Likewise, organisers are also a helpful planning and assessment tool for teachers, as we can sequence content and address learning gaps more effectively.

Our Networked Learning Community even conducted a Teacher-Led Workshop on 5 July 2022 to guide teachers on how they can incorporate such organisers in the Literature classroom. Teachers interested in accessing free sample knowledge organiser templates from the workshop can visit:

https://for.edu.sg/litknowledgesample

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Example 1: Knowledge Organiser on *The Joy Luck Club* (by Ow Yeong Wai Kit and Bukit Batok Secondary School 4E Literature students)

Literature Knowledge Organiser: *The Joy Luck Club*

Chapter	Plot Summary
Parable 1. Feathers from a Thousand Li Away	***An old woman*** *recounts how she purchased a swan before immigrating from China to America when she was young. Her dream for success comes true, but her daughter becomes Americanised and cannot communicate with her.*
1. The Joy Luck Club (Jing-mei Woo)	***Jing-mei*** *is invited by her father to play a game of mahjong with the Joy Luck Club members. Jing-mei recalls her mother's tale of Kweilin and the war. Her Joy Luck Club aunties give her money to visit her sisters in China.*
2. Scar (An-mei Hsu)	***An-mei*** *recounts the stories that Popo told her when she was younger.* ***An-mei's mother*** *returns to care for* ***Popo*** *as the latter is dying; she sacrifices her flesh.*
3. The Red Candle (Lindo Jong)	***Lindo*** *recounts how she was promised to* ***Huang Taitai*** *and her son Tyan-yu. Lindo engineers a cunning plan to escape from the marriage by capitalising on Huang Taitai's superstitiousness. Lindo leaves for America.*
4. The Moon Lady (Ying-Ying St. Clair)	***Ying-Ying*** *recounts the Moon Festival when she was four: she recounts the story of the* ***Moon Lady.*** *Initially captivated, Ying-ying discovers to her horror that the Moon Lady is actually a male actor. She recalls her childhood wish: to be found.*
Parable 2. The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates	***A mother*** *warns* ***her daughter*** *about the dangers of riding her bicycle out of her mother's sight. The mother cites a Chinese book entitled The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates. In the end, the daughter falls, as her mother predicted.*
5. Rules of the Game (Waverly Jong)	***Waverly*** *narrates her childhood experience as a chess prodigy.* ***Lindo*** *expresses her pride by flaunting Waverly's abilities. Embarrassed by her mother, she tries to run away from home but ultimately is forced to return.*
6. The Voice From The Wall (Lena St. Clair)	***Lena*** *recounts her biracial identity: her father is white while her mother* ***Ying-ying*** *is Chinese. Ying-ying turns into a 'ghost', eventually not speaking. Her baby is stillborn.* ***Teresa*** *and* ***Mrs Sorci*** *quarrel but eventually reconcile.*
7. Half and Half (Rose Hsu Jordan)	***Rose*** *recounts how she met* ***Ted****; they get married despite his parents' disapproval. Later Ted blames Rose and divorces her. Rose also remembers the drowning of her brother* ***Bing*** *during a family trip to the beach.*
8. Two Kinds (Jing-Mei Woo)	***Jing-mei*** *remembers* ***Suyuan*** *trying to make her a childhood prodigy. Suyuan decides that Jing-mei will learn piano. Jing-mei embarrasses herself by playing poorly at a show, and she throws a tantrum, shouting harshly at her mother.*
Parable 3. American Translation	***A mother*** *criticises* ***her daughter****'s placement of mirrors, believing that it will only result in bad luck as marital happiness will bounce away, according to Chinese geomancy. Her mother fixes it for her by offering her a large mirror.*
9. Rice Husband (Lena St. Clair)	***Lena*** *describes her mother's 'prophetic' abilities. Ying-Ying had predicted that Lena would marry a bad man. Lena recalls a childhood bully (****Arnold****). She also remembers how she meets* ***Harold****, who is calculative and transactional.*
10. Four Directions (Waverly Jong)	***Waverly*** *attempts to win* ***Lindo****'s approval of her fiancé,* ***Rich****. Waverly reveals her first marriage with* ***Marvin Chen****. Waverly realises her mother's vulnerability, before declaring her plans to get married. Lindo eventually warms up to Rich.*
11. Without Wood (Rose Hsu Jordan)	***Rose*** *describes her trust in the words of her mother,* ***An-mei****. At a funeral, Rose tells An-mei about her impending divorce from* ***Ted****, who has been unfaithful. Eventually, Rose makes up her mind and she gives him unsigned divorce papers.*
12. Best Quality (Jing-Mei Woo)	*At the dinner party,* ***Waverly*** *brings her daughter* ***Shoshana****, and gives her the best crab. Jing-mei and* ***Suyuan*** *are left with a small crab and a broken-limbed one; Suyuan acknowledges Jing-mei's sacrifice, giving her a jade pendant.*

Chapter	Plot Summary
Parable 4. Queen Mother of the Western Skies	*A* ***grandmother*** *tells her* ***granddaughter*** *about how she had lost her innocence and how she taught her daughter. The grandmother teases her granddaughter, calling her Syi Wang Mu (Queen Mother of the Western Skies).*
13. Magpies (An-Mei Hsu)	***An-mei*** *recalls her past, during which* ***her mother*** *came back to visit.* ***Wu Tsing****, had raped and manipulated her mother, who killed herself, sacrificing her weak spirit to give An-Mei a stronger one. An-mei tells Rose that she does not need to swallow her tears, or suffer the taunts of magpies.*
14. Waiting Between the Trees Ying-Ying St. Clair)	***Ying-Ying*** *describes* ***Lena****'s home, before recollecting her past. She meets* ***Clifford St. Clair*** *and agrees to marry hlm. But she decides that she must tell her daughter about her past and pass her tiger spirit to her daughter.*
15. Double Face (Lindo Jong)	*Lindo meets Tin Jong, whom she marries. They had three children, Winston, VIncent and Waverly. She named Waverly after the street they lived on. Lindo finally considers the idea of having two faces, and why one must be sacrificed.*
16. A Pair of Tickets (Jing-Mei Woo)	*Canning tells Jing-mei about how he met* ***Suyuan*** *in Chungking.* ***Jing-mei*** *flies to China with her father* ***Canning*** *to meet her half-sisters,* ***Chwun Yu*** *and* ***Chwun Hua****; they embrace. Jing-mei finally sees the part of her that is truly Chinese.*

Characters

Suyuan Woo	*Mother of Jing-mei Woo; long-suffering, determined*
Jing-mei Woo	*Daughter of Suyuan Woo; sensitive, reflective*
An-mei Hsu	*Mother of Rose; meek at times; stoic; 'nengkan'*
Rose Hsu Jordan	*Daughter of An-mei; indecisive at first; brave later*
Lindo Jong	*Mother of Waverly; cunning, manipulative*
Waverly Jong	*Daughter of Lindo; competitive, self-centred*
Ying-Ying St Clair	*Mother of Lena St Clair; became a living 'ghost'*
Lena St Clair	*Daughter of Ying-ying; unhappily married*
Canning Woo	*Suyuan's second husband; father of Jing Mei Woo*
Tin Jong	*Lindo's second husband; a good father*
Clifford St Clair	*Father of Lena St Clair; loving, patient and devoted*
Popo	*An-mei's grandmother; became deathly ill*
An-mei's Mother	*Mother of An-mei; victim of rape; dies by poison*
Wu Tsing	*Rich merchant who raped An-mei's mother*
Huang Taitai	*Former mother-in-law of Lindo; cruel and demanding*
Tyanyu	*Lindo's former husband; immature and selfish*
Ted Jordan	*Rose's ex-husband; imposes demands on Rose*
Harold Livotny	*Lena's estranged husband and her boss*
Rich Schields	*Waverly's fiance; very romantic and persistent*

Motifs / Symbols

- Ghosts
- Tiger
- Jade Pendant
- Chess
- Candles
- Mahjong
- Bible
- Vase (Lena's)
- Table (unstable)
- Weeds
- Chinese Zodiac
- Magpies
- Duck / Swans
- Pearl Necklace
- Sapphire Ring

Context

Second Sino-Japanese War – *(1937-1945) due to Japanese imperialist policies. Affected cities included Kweilin and Chungking. Most civilians fled before the attack, which is what Suyuan did.*

Chinese Civil War – *(1927 to 1949) a civil war fought between the Kuomintang and Communist Party in China; the Communist Party won and formed the People's Republic of China; the KMT fled to Taiwan. Some refugees escaped to America.*

Chinese immigration to America *– largest population of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco, where the TJLC families live, this second wave of immigration was partly due to the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act (1943), which repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).*

The American Dream *– a national ethos of the United States; in which everyone deserves the right of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' regardless of social class and circumstances of birth. It also promotes the ideals of the nation such as democracy, liberty, and equality.*

Themes

- Mother-daughter relationships
- Translation and mistranslation
- Gender / the exploitation of women
- Sacrifice / Suffering
- Love / Marriage & Family
- The American Dream / Assimilation
- Prejudice and Discrimination
- Fate / Destiny and Superstition
- Loyalty / Fidelity / Faithfulness
- Truth vs. Falsehood / Appearance vs. Reality / Perception vs. Actuality

By Ow Yeong Wai Kit and students: https://for.edu.sg/litknowledgesample

Knowledge Organiser: *Percy Jackson and the Lighting Thief*				
Chapters/Acts/ Scenes	**Plot**	**Characters**	**Character Description**	**Themes**
Chapter 1: I accidentally vaporize my pre-alegebra teacher	Percy and his classmates went on a field trip to the museum where he pushed Nancy into the fountain for disturbing Grover and him. Mrs Dodds brought him aside to punish him but turned into a magical creature with leathery wings and attacked him. Mr Brunner came to his rescue and Percy managed to kill the creature.	Percy Jackson Grover Nancy Mr Brunner Mrs Dodds	Percy - Demi God, attends a school for students with issues Grover - Percy's friend Nancy - Class bully Mr Brunner - Latin Teacher	
Chapter 2: Three old ladies knit the Socks of Death	Percy's grades continued to worsen and he could not control his anger in class. He learned that he would not be invited back to Yancy Academy for his seventh grade year. While he's excited to go home and see his mom, Percy knows he's going to miss certain aspects of Yancy. He's going to miss Mr. Brunner. The meeting with the three old ladies shocks Grover who is convinced Percy's life is at risk.	Percy Jackson Mr Brunner Grover 3 Old Ladies	Percy - a Demi God Grover - Seems to be hiding information from Percy. Knows more than he lets on. Three old ladies - able to determine one's fate.	
Chapter 3: Grover unexpectantly loses his trousers	Percy and his mother's loving relationship is evident. They go on a beach vacation where we get glimpses of information about Percy's father. Percy's stepfather Gabe is despicable.	Percy Grover Sally Gabe	Percy - a loving son Sally - a loving mother who tolerates her husband and still loves Percy's father	
Chapter 4: My mother teaches me bullfighting	Percy is in danger as the Minotaur wants to kill him. Grover and Sally try their best to protect him and Sally ends up sacrificing herself.	Percy Grover Sally Gabe Annabeth	Percy - a demi-god; brave Grover - Percy's friend - a loyal friend Annabeth - New character Sally - Percy's mother	

Example 2: Draft Excerpt of Knowledge Organisers about *Percy Jackson and the Lighting Thief* by (Kavitha Desai and Fuhua Sec 1N Literature students)

Example 3: Draft Excerpt of Knowledge Organiser about *The Crucible* (by Kali Sri Sivanantham andBukit Batok Secondary 4E Literature students)

A Bird's Eye View of *The Crucible*					
***The Crucible* explores a variety of sociology based on historical contexts. Briefly track the narratives and how Miller has powerfully presented the messages**					
Act	**Setting**	**Characters**	**Significant Events**	**Themes**	**Style/Technique**

One	• Parris' house	• Parris
		• Betty
		• Tituba
		• Abigail
		• Susanna
		• Mrs Putnam
		• Mr Putnam
		• Mercy
			• Betty is ill with no existing medicine to treat her
			• Betty speaks of rumors of witchcraft floating about
			• Parris reveals Abigail, Betty and the girls were dancing in the Woods
			  • Paranoid his associationg w/them will be used against him -> lose his position as Ministry
			  • Interrogates Abigail and suspects the goodness of her name
				• Reputation
				• Hysteria
				• Quest for power
				• Danger of ideology
				• Guilt by association
					• Foreshadowing
					• Irony

Example 4: Draft Excerpt of Knowledge Organiser about *Kindred* (by Kali Sri Sivanantham and Bukit Batok Secondary 4E Literature students)

Bird's Eye View of *Kindred*					
***Kindred* switches between two spaces, time and realities - the modern day occurences and the secrets that the protagonist uncovers about her past. Fill up this chart to help you keep track of the location, characters involved, key events and themes occuring in each scene**					
Act	**Setting**	**Characters**	**Significant Events**	**Themes**	**Style/Technique**

Prologue	Present Day	• Dana
		• Kevin
		• Police officers
			• Dana lost an arm
			• Police interrogated Dana
			  • suspected Kevin
			  • simplified loss of arm as just "hurt"
			• Dana & Kevin at hospital together
			• Dana has a secret about how she was actually hurt
			  • Arm was crushed into the walls of her home
			  • X tell truth -> seem crazy
			  • Didn't know how to explain it either
				• Racism
				• Abuse of Authority
				• Interracial Relationship
					• Foreshadowing
					• Suspense
					• Mystery

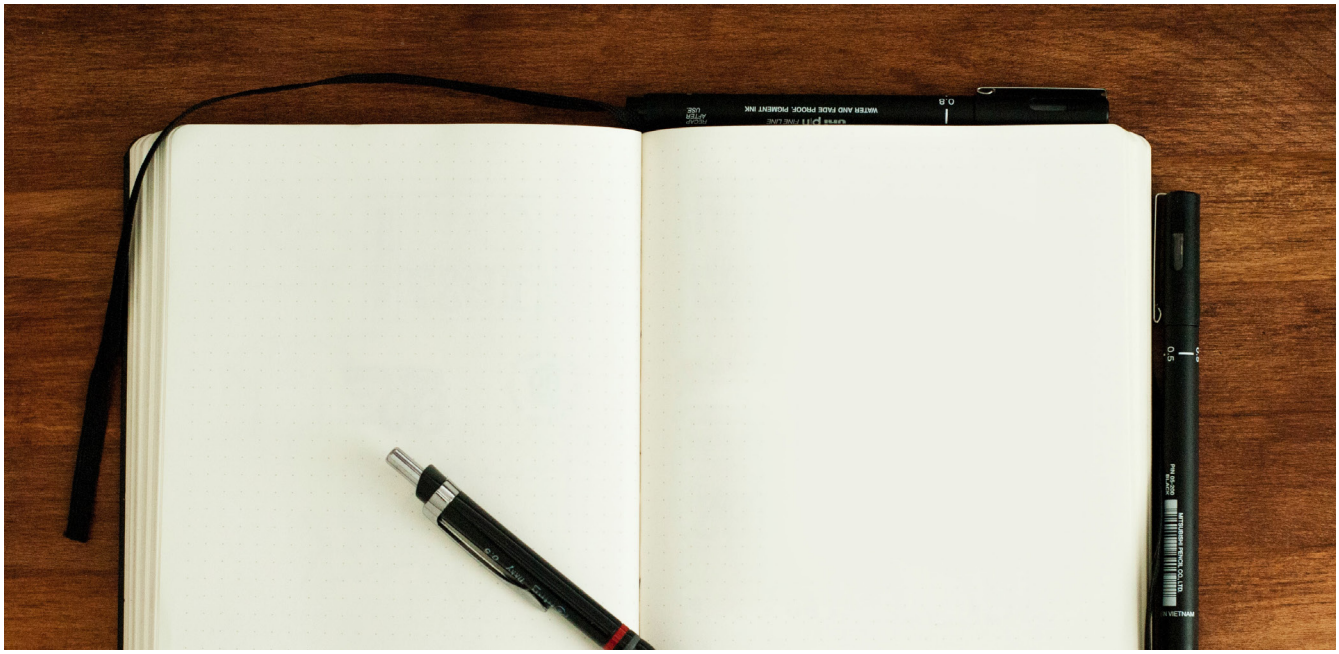
Example 5: Draft Excerpt of Knowledge Organiser of *Fahrenheit 451* (by Shaleni Nedumaran and Fuchun Secondary 4NA Literature students)

Event/Scene	Plot Summary	Characters Involved	Character Description	Themes	Symbols/Motifs	Background Content	Key Messages/ Analysis of the story	Connections
Overview of the key indicdent in the novel	Brief storyline/sequence and key highlights	Different characters	Roles and personalities of the characters	Main subject matter/ issues/ writer's messages in the story	Key symbols used and the purpose/ implied meaning		What important issues or social messages is the writer conveying through this story	Cross reference to other relevant points in the rest of the novel
Event/Scene 1: Mildred leaves the house and Beatty orders Montag to burn his house down	In this final section of the book, Montag discovers that Millie turned in the fire alarm. When he arrives at his own home, Montag looks at Clarisse's home and ponders about her. Beatty taunts Montag in a mean-spirited way and reminds Montag of the many warnings. Then Beatty forces Montag to set fire to his own home	- Millie - Montag - Beatty	**Mille:** Passive, conformist, not really in love with Montag, escapist **Montag:** non-comformist, fearful/ apprehensive **Beatty:** mean-spirited, bully, conformist	- Censorship - Conformity VS Individuality - Distraction VS Happiness - Taking Action	Fire - the power of fire to destroy and end Does it bring liberation as well?	Books are forbidden in the society of Fahrenheit 451 and by keeping them Montag has broken the law		Burning of Old Lady's Home
Event/Scene 2: Beatty arrests Montag, mocks him	Faber urges Montag to escape, but Montag is hesitant cuz of the mechanical hound. Montag goes back to his old way of thinking coz of Beatty's verbal assault on him. Beatty find out about Faber and threaten him, this motivates Montag to go against Beatty.	- Beatty - Montag - Faber	**Beatty:** full of intentions to assault people verbally **Montag:** had more motivation and confidence to attach Beatty as he threatens Faber **Faber:** Trys to prevent bad things happening	- Taking action - Mass media		Beatty was disappointed that Montag might have more books hidden. Beatty does not believe that books should be read. He is a conformist and wants to up keep the law/law abiding; he's a victim of the system which is the government	Montag has been reduced to defend himself and finally awaken	Beatty wanted to change Montag mindset to think that the society is good
Event/Scene 3: Burning down Beatty	Beatty asks Montag to hand the flamethrower over and Montag burns him instead and knocks out Black and Stoneman. After awhile the mechanical hound arrives on the scene and heads for Montag. The hound leaps at Montag and stabs him in his leg using a procaine needle just as Montag hits it with a blast of liquid fire from the flamethrower.	- Montag - Beatty - Mechanical Hound - Black and Stoneman	**Montag:** Like a possessed person/ controlled **Beatty:** Taunts Montag to threaten him **Mechancial Hound:** A mechanical machine that inhects people to anaesthetize people	- Ignorance - Survival - Good and Evil	Fire - It ended Beatty's life and gave Montag a chance to live	Montag fights for freedom while Beatty accepts his death		
Event/Scene 4: Montag hobbles to his backyard and then heads to a gas station	After getting jabbed by the Mechancial Hound, Montag took the unburnt books from his backyard and ran with it, heading towards a gas station.	- Montag	**Montag:** Psyching himself that killing Beatty is alright/He is guilty		Knowledge - is it really that coveted?	Montag is now a fugitive and is running from the authorities		

ENACTING RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM

by Yip Guanhui (Pei Hwa Secondary School)



Yip Guanhui is Head of Department of English Language at Pei Hwa Secondary School. He graduated from NUS with a big bookshelf and counts it a privilege to have been taught by kind and dedicated teachers throughout his schooling years.

Yip Guanhui reflects on how introducing retrieval practice to the teaching of Literature can help students to tackle the challenge of knowledge recall under stress — he offers three practical strategies to implement this practice.

Two Stories

This article is about my journey in implementing elements of Retrieval Practice (RP) in both lower and upper-secondary Literature in English classrooms.

Two indelible experiences have shaped my views on RP — both involved end-of-year examinations (EYEs). In one instance, I was teaching a poetry unit for half a year as part of the lower-secondary Literature curriculum. There was a student who was particularly outspoken, enthusiastic, and effusive in her appreciation for poetry. She spoke up knowledgeably in the classroom and submitted beautifully written take-home essays. As we neared the EYE, she booked a consultation session with me to go through her practice essay plans, which I went over with a fine-tooth comb. She was all ready. So I thought. When the examination came, her script was blank. She had submitted nothing.

The second experience involved teaching *The Joy Luck Club* in Secondary Three. It was my first time teaching the text and I knew that it was a complex

text, with many characters and an interweaving, non-linear plot trajectory. I taught it chronologically, thematically, and used model essays to guide the students. I consulted my Head of Department for tips on how I could teach better. When the EYE approached, I revised with my class and sent my class marching into the examination hall. When the scripts came back, I marked with enthusiasm. There was one particular essay which left me dumbfounded. The student had compared two sisters in the text and wrote, what I considered to be, a well-argued analysis of the sisters' motivations, character arcs, and thematic concerns. If I could, I would have given the student a distinction. The only problem was that: the student had mixed up the sisters' names.

Why RP?

Both experiences struck a chord with me. I had two main takeaways:

The ability to retrieve content from one's mind should not be taken for granted.

In the case of my lower-secondary student, I had assumed she was ready for an examination. But she was not. She was a good student in the classroom and could write a decent essay under stress-free conditions and with reference to the text. However, I should not have taken that as an indication that she could do it in an examination-setting. In the case of my Secondary Three student, I made the most fundamental assumption that she knew her characters' names. I had focused so much on the plot, characterisation, themes, and essay-writing, that I had neglected to test her on her fundamental knowledge of the text.

Blank paper + Time constraint = Stress

When I spoke to my lower-secondary student, I finally realised that she had an aversion towards examination constraints. Simply put, her mind went blank when she was presented with a blank piece of paper and asked to produce content on demand. I could have detected that earlier if I had asked her to practise retrieving information on the spot. If I had, I would have noticed her inability to do so.

What is RP?

Fundamentally, Retrieval Practice is the act of trying to recall information without having it in front of you.[1] Good writers have explicated on the principles and processes of Retrieval Practice in books and essays. In particular, I learnt a lot from Kate Jones's *Retrieval Practice: Resources and Research for Every Classroom*.

I would argue that Retrieval Practice is particularly useful as a tool for a Literature teacher for the following reasons:

1. In a time-starved environment, RP offers teachers a low-effort, maximum-impact tool. It can be implemented without worksheets, slides, and does not require a lot of time.
2. Literature is a subject that requires students to be able to remember a lot of content. A student who can retrieve content accurately and confidently is a student who can then focus on the crafting of arguments.
3. RP encourages students to read their texts more regularly if there is a routine where teachers test their students' knowledge of the text regularly.

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Suggestions on the Implementation of RP in the classroom

I have tried a variety of ways to incorporate RP in the classroom. Some methods work better for some students. Here are some suggestions for your consideration in your classroom:

1. 5-minute dumping sessions

Ask students to write down everything that they know about 'X' in five minutes. I have tried asking students to write down: facts about a character, quotes related to a theme, a timeline of events. The most important step after that is to ask students to take out their texts and to *compare* their written notes with the text. What is missing on the paper represents the gap in their understanding or indicates what they have not sufficiently internalised.

Five minutes is a good duration. It's sufficient for students to jot down at least a few bullet points and does not tire them out excessively. In addition, the final act of comparison between their written notes and the text serves to help them recognise what is 'missing' in their understanding, in a low-stakes manner. I tell the students that it's better to realise this gap in practice than to discover it painfully in an examination.

2. Structured retrieval sessions

Depending on the content, teachers can prepare a handout for the students to fill up. This handout helps to scaffold their thinking and helps them to practise retrieving in a targeted manner. Please refer to the following examples:

Write down three adjectives to describe the following character: Saloma	**Write down a quote which should consist of at least 3 words that can be used in support of the adjective.**
Adjective 1:	Quote 1:
Adjective 2:	Quote 2:
Adjective 3:	Quote 3:

Figure 1. Handout for *Off Centre*

In this handout, students are asked to retrieve three adjectives from their mind to describe Saloma. Asking them to cite a quote is important as it helps them to relate the concept to a concrete quote.

Students often struggle with the quote component of the exercise, but the struggle is an important process which contributes to long-term retention.

Write down 3 symbols from Fahrenheit 451	Explain in 1-2 sentences what the symbols represent
Motif 1: Fire	
Motif 2: Rebirth	
Motif 3:	

Figure 2. Handout for *Fahrenheit 451*

In this example, I have provided a further scaffold to guide the students to recall. For particularly challenging themes/characters, teachers may wish to provide even more scaffolding to help the students.

3. Individual, Pair, Group Work

RP is fundamentally a solitary activity. It forces the individual to think hard under two kinds of pressure: time pressure and peer pressure. I have seen able students sweat literally from thinking and have seen them buckle under the pressure when they see their peers retrieve effortlessly, while their paper remains bleakly blank. Teachers can implement RP in pairs or in groups as a start in order to encourage the weaker students. But we should not forget that RP, at the end of the day, is a solitary activity.

Some ideas to stimulate pair/group retrieval practice:

1. Come up with as many quotes on a theme
2. Write out a timeline of the key events of a play
3. Write out the explanations of the Five Areas of Study in Literature

Conclusion

When I first tried out RP, I was met with dismay and confusion from some of my students. I struggled too with the notion that I was devoting precious curriculum time to these retrieval exercises. Over time, those 5-10 minute sessions added up. However, two outcomes have encouraged me to persevere in implementing this tool as part of my teaching repertoire:

1. When students have experienced intense difficulty in retrieving content multiple times in the classroom, **they find it much, much easier to retrieve content in an examination setting**. They had built up the stamina and gotten used to the routine of recalling facts within a stressful setting. No longer would they submit empty scripts.
2. When students are confident in their facts, **they can argue with greater conviction in their essays**. The regular retrieving sessions imbued them with confidence and they could focus on crafting their arguments, knowing that they would be able to supply the correct quote(s) to advance the arguments. No longer would they mix the characters' names up.

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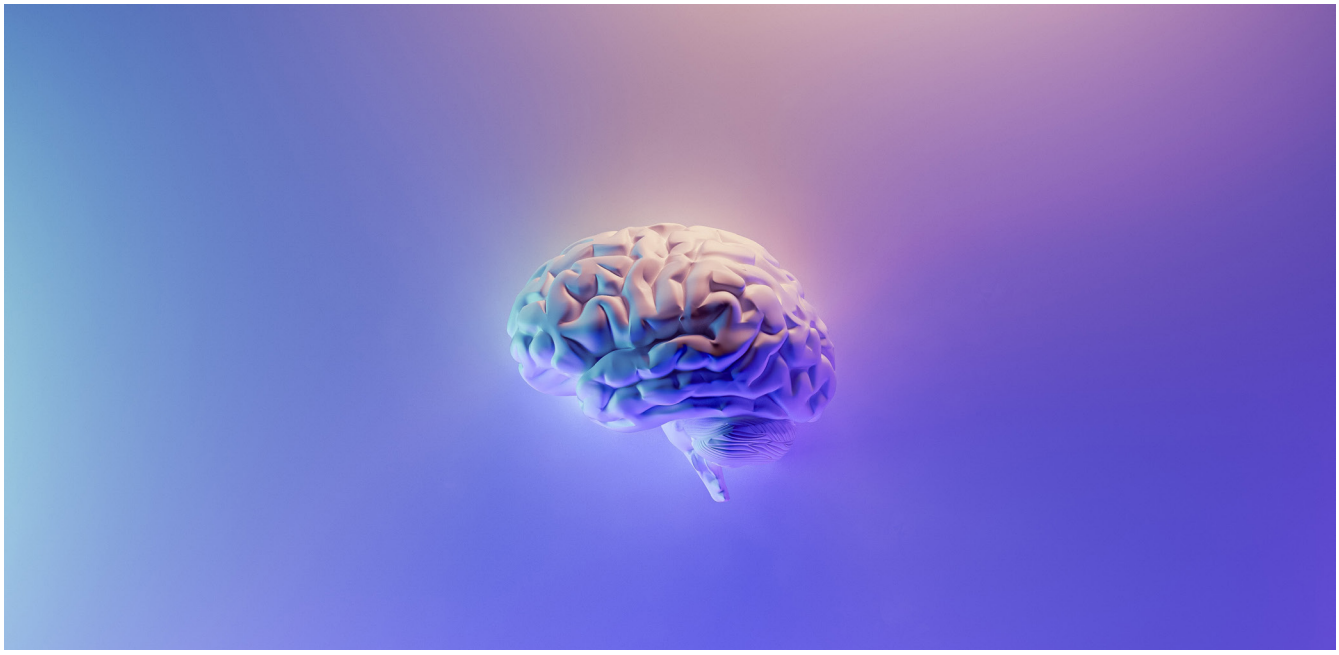
NEUROMYTHS: WHAT LITERATURE TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR ASTRID SCHMIED



In this interview, Dr Astrid Schmied highlights two key neuromyths which teachers commonly subscribe to that have been disputed by educational neuroscience research.

Dr Astrid Schmied is an educational neuroscientist and education research scientist of the Science of Learning in Education Centre at the Office of Education Research, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Her research interests include the teaching and learning process of neuropsychological content, the acquisition of academic and cognitive skills, the development of specific learning disorders, and the evolution of educational neuroscience in academia. She also engages in programmes that promote public science, scientific outreach, and education and science policy.

Dr Astrid has conducted research at governmental offices, schools and universities, and non-profits. Her pedagogical practices and investigations have expanded from K-12 to university students to older adults, including interventions in socially vulnerable spaces.

In layman's terms, what are neuromyths?

The term 'neuromyth' was coined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) almost 20 years ago. The OECD defines neuromyths as common misconceptions about the brain, the brain functioning, and/or the nervous system in general.

Neuromyths evolve from a misunderstanding, a misreading, or a deliberate distortion of scientific facts and are taken for granted in today's society. The prevalence of neuromyths has been described globally.

What are some neuromyths that Literature teachers ought to be aware of?

The list of neuromyths is extensive, and several of these have implications for education, including Literature education. There is a vast amount of literature demonstrating that pre-service and in-service teachers are a very sensitive population to neuromyths; their belief in neuromyths is common.

One of the most prevalent neuromyths that teachers have comprises the idea that students have different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes. While some students may indicate preferences for certain modes, there is no specific learning style that would suit any one group of students more effectively compared to others. The research evidence suggests that learning styles do not exist; all learners would benefit from a variety of learning modes and approaches.

Another common neuromyth implies that we are either left or right brained. However, there is no scientific evidence supporting this notion. We use both sides of the brain at all times. Thus, it is not true that Literature students would only use their right brain just because it is a humanities subject. Both sides of the brain are actively engaged to perform everyday activities effectively.

Why should Literature teachers be aware of these neuromyths?

Neuromyths could be problematic in education, including Literature education, because teachers could consume products or implement practices in their classrooms that are not supported by scientific research. For example, teachers may implement differentiated lesson plans to facilitate learning in supposedly 'visual', 'auditory', and 'kinesthetic' students, when actually no such learning styles exist. Teachers may also rely on teaching practices that purportedly develop one side of the brain (especially the left side) in order to promote critical thinking skills. Literature teachers would be well-advised, for instance, to beware of any programmes and strategies that claim to be "suited for right-brain learners." In the end, these teaching and learning practices can waste the educational system's money, time, and effort. Neuroscience literacy is important in teacher education to debunk neuromyths that can be harmful.

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NIE ELL LITERATURE SNAPSHOTS

We asked our NIE ELL Literature faculty members for updates to share with the Literature fraternity — here's what they're working on now!

ELL Faculty

"After the publication of *The World, The Text and The Classroom: Teaching Literature in Singapore Secondary Schools*, I wrote about one of my favourite movies and published "The Virtual Cultural Tourist: Film-induced Tourism and Kubo and the Two Strings" in the journal *Mutual Images*. A few essays on the zombie movie *Fido*, a short film (Barry Purves's *Screen Play*), the afterlife in *The Others* and a survey of local director Kelvin Tong's horror oeuvre are waiting in the wings.

I'm currently working on a research project that studies the pedagogy of award-winning English teachers and writing an article on Singlish in the Singapore kopitiam in the animated series *Downstairs*."

– Dr Dennis Yeo

"Recently, I conducted research into the use of drama pedagogy in the literature classroom. Plays are literary texts invested with a double life—they can be read for their literary qualities, but they're also designed to be staged for their theatrical possibilities.

My research reveals that drama pedagogy helps to build students' affinity for characters, text, and literature as a subject. I'm also looking into the possibility of compiling a local short story anthology for the lower secondary classroom, as a companion to my lower secondary drama anthology, *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed* (2018)."

– Dr Ken Mizusawa

"I'm currently working on three projects. The first is an education research grant that explores how values are cultivated through pedagogy. We've administered a national survey on values pedagogy and we're working with CCE and English teachers from two schools.

I'm also writing a number of research papers related to historicizing ethical criticism and exploring the ways students can engage with ethics through literature.

This is connected to my theorisations of the hospitable imagination and cosmopolitan ethics. A third project examines the use of philosophical fiction for children and young adults to facilitate ethical dialogue and deliberation."

– Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Choo

"I'm working on two things at the same time (not advisable!). One is a book chapter on the cosmopolitan imagination in Singapore literature for an edited collection of critical essays.

The other is my own book project tentatively entitled *Global City Dilemmas and Anglophone Singapore Literature: Intersectional Politics and Cultural Negotiations in the 21st Century*. Here I consider how 21st-century Singapore writers explore the cultural negotiations and political tensions that arise from the country's twin identities as postcolonial nation and global city.

I'm especially interested in fiction's interrogations of dominant narratives about the past, multiracialism, and social cohesion. Texts I'm considering include Balli Kaur Jaswal's *Inheritance*, Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*, Akshita Nanda's *Nimita's Place* and Amanda Lee Koe's *Ministry of Moral Panic*."

– Assoc. Prof. Angelia Poon

"I've been busy working on my research on reading and school libraries, helping school libraries to build up their space, collection and programming, including their SingLit book collection.

This year, for my BA class, we collaborated with Yusof Ishak Secondary School, to design a place-based lesson which you will read about in the next issue of *Enl*ght*. I'm extremely interested in what and how teens read, and I'm supervising a couple of undergraduate research projects examining adolescent reading of Young Adult novels, *manga* and *manhwa*, in print and through online sources."

– Assoc. Prof. Loh Chin Ee

"I'm currently working on a detailed exploration of William Blake's letters, perhaps for the first time considering them as literary works in themselves as opposed to secondary writings of merely biographical importance.

This state of affairs is perhaps understandable, as seriously focused in-depth Romanticism and letters studies themselves are currently in their early stages.

But a fresh look reveals Blake as a deft, imaginative and lively letter writer — the letters themselves inviting sensitive and careful readership."

– Dr Angus Whitehead

"I've been teaching American and Southeast Asian Literature, creative writing, and a course on identity and multicultural issues at NIE.

My research interests include 'minority' issues and 'race'."

– Dr Pat Wong

"My research interests are transnational and postcolonial writing from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and India. I'm always curious about why the postcolonial still matters in the new millennium.

Currently, I'm working on the tropical gothic in Nick Joaquin's fiction and tropicality in the craft of selected Singapore women poets. I'm also preparing a monograph on Anglophone world writing from Southeast Asia and co-editing a creative anthology of Southeast Asian ecowriting, while maintaining a research interest in using creative writing in the literature classroom."

– Dr Ann Ang

Graduate students/PhD candidates

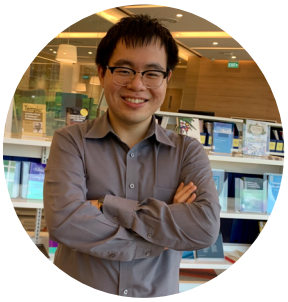
I'm currently working on my thesis that investigates how primary school children respond towards metafictive children's fiction.

As postmodern or metafictive texts are not a common genre that children are usually introduced to at a young age, I'm interested in exploring how children read and respond to these types of books.

I'm also curious to see what these books can afford in terms of dispositions for global competencies, especially in the face of globalisation.

I've recently wrapped up book club sessions with different groups of children from a local primary school, and it was great fun!

– Gan Sujia
(Supervisor: A/P Loh Chin Ee)



"I'm in the first year of my PhD, so I'm completing my coursework. My current research aims to translate findings from the Science of Learning about memory and emotions to the teaching of poetry in the Literature classroom.

I'm also exploring the history and value of learning poetry by heart, especially in the Singapore context, in terms of whether it's similar to trends in the broader English-speaking world, and how the practice is influenced by our colonial history.

On a deeper level, I'm investigating how to leverage cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions to make literary knowledge more enduring, and for poetry lessons to be even more engaging."

– Ow Yeong Wai Kit
(Supervisor: A/P Angelia Poon)

"I'm currently working towards my thesis on examining student receptivity and resistance towards ethically oriented Literature pedagogies.

My data draws from co-designed Literature units between mainstream upper secondary Literature teachers and NIE researchers exploring issues on race and identity, as well as privilege and inequality using Singapore poetry.

I'm keen on exploring how students take a range of self-centred to other-centred stances when understanding the Other, and how classroom interactions open or close the possibilities of ethical engagement.

I'm also working on several research papers on how Literature students respond to linguistic diversity and classroom debates of texts with ethical invitations."

– Nah Dominic
(Supervisor: A/P Suzanne Choo)

Volume Eight Issue One of Enl*ght delves into the Science of Learning.
We invite you to read this volume and adapt the ideas for your classroom.