



inote

[Irish National Organisation
for Teachers of English]

Magazine October 2023

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If you want to make your own 'lightbulb moment' for the Youtube page, please email me at it@inote.ie



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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the fifth edition of the INOTE Magazine and my first as the editor. Conor Murphy did fantastic work as editor over the past few years, and after many rounds of Gladiator- styled contests, I won the coveted title of being his successor.

Enough about me. The INOTE Magazine is a reflection and celebration of the work English teachers do and an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues across the country. The variety of topics and writers on the left-hand side show that this positive energy is alive and well in the English world.

It has been a hectic few years. The theme this year is 'breathing space' as we need to take an opportunity to pause, say well done to ourselves for our hard work and share ideas to provide others with a bit more breathing space. As you go about the conference or thumb through this magazine on some idle Tuesday, I hope you are filled with energy and positivity about teaching English.

INOTE is always open to ideas and contributions. Whether offering an article or a lightbulb moment for the YouTube page, your willingness to share with others will always have a home at INOTE.

William Byrne, Editor
@Carlowbhoy88

Have you every wondered what English Teacher Group existed before INOTE?

by Cathy Keane

I was doing a clear-out in school and came across the first edition of a journal published in 1970 by the Association of the Teachers of English (ATE).

The organisation was founded in 1964, 59 years ago, with various branches actively serving throughout the country. ATE had a branch in the South East, North Munster, Sligo, Cork, Galway and Dublin. Volunteerism among teachers was alive and well back in the day!

In 1969-1970, the Central Executive Committee of the ATE was made up of:

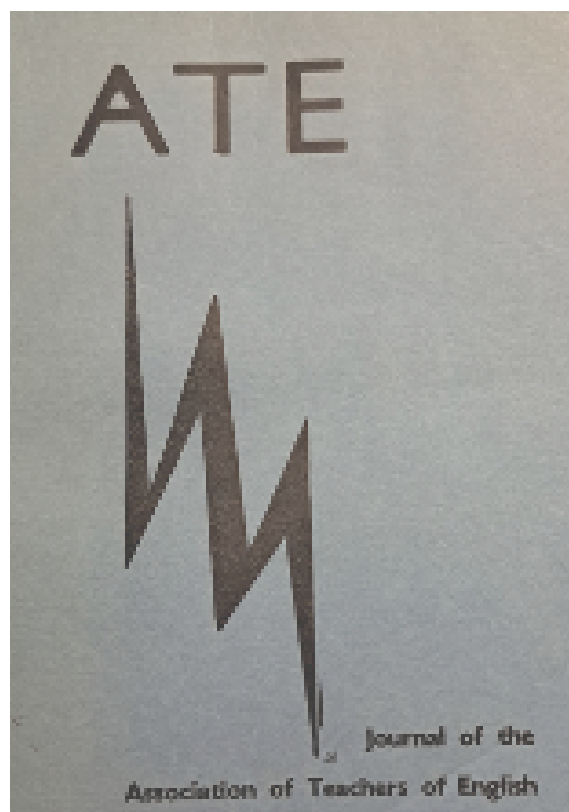
Chair:	Veronica O'Brien
Honorary Secretary:	Sr Eileen Sweeney
Honorary Treasurer:	John O'Doherty
Members:	Patrick Burke
	Patricia Corr
	Sr Domenico
	Sr Enda
	John Killeen
	Augustine Martin
	Dr L. E. Nelson
	Rev. J. Veale

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Editor: VERONICA O BRIEN		
Business Manager: PATRICK BURKE		

All distinguished educationists who helped to shape the choice of content for the English curriculum and to inspire their colleagues by organising gatherings for teachers. Isn't it striking that there were four members of the Catholic Church involved at committee level?

In the image of the contents, we can see the names of various contributors to the journal. The Irish academic and founding member of ATE, Augustine Martin, shared the limelight with Patrick Murray of the famous Edco "Murray English Notes" (which are still doing the rounds) along with the renowned actor Cyril Cusack and Poet/Novelist, the late Seamus Deane. Some lesser-known word-smiths were T.M. Brown, Sr Louise Marie Clancy and Maureen Lonergan.

The editorial reveals the association's commitment and dedication to its members' professional development and to the advancement of English teaching at local and national levels. The aim was to support teaching and learning at all levels. Expertise, knowledge, and skills were shared amongst teachers who were at the coal face. The association provided a forum for communication and ideas. INOTE continues to uphold these noble ideals.



EDITORIAL

An A.T.E. journal has been an ambition since the association was founded in 1964: realisation had to wait until enough time and energy could be withdrawn from certain urgent activities which occupied the association in the early years. *Ate I* is the first attempt to meet those demands which can be met only through print.

The shape of *Ate* is determined by the special interests of teachers of English. Thus one group of articles is concerned with literature as literature, not as syllabus-content; another with the act of teaching itself, with what happens in the classroom—in this issue teaching children in the first years of their post-primary education. But the concerns of an association of teachers do not end there, especially of teachers of English. Since language is so bound up with the whole growth, the increase in depth and reach of the person, we feel that this journal should be concerned too with the idea of education itself—a concern implicit in several of the articles already referred to—and critically alert to the current problems in our system as a whole. In this issue, one such problem is given specific consideration in the comment on the Intermediate Certificate. We chose this problem for our first issue for two main reasons: it is a problem which affects post-primary pupils at their most vulnerable stage intellectually; it is a problem sufficiently self-contained to put a solution within the bounds of present possibility.

In the era of the Celtic Tiger, ATE still existed, running events during term time and a week-long summer school sometimes held in the Dublin Writer's Museum. What a fitting venue for guest speakers like Doris Lessing, Seamus Heaney, Evan Boland, Michael Longley, Denis O'Driscoll, Robert Fiske and Fintan O'Toole to name a few! While ATE represented the national organisation (it held positions on the NCCA and on course committees), there were various splinter English organisations dotted around the country that were supporting local teachers in their counties.

It was when the government introduced a substantial supplementary funding scheme for subject associations (TPN), Kevin McDermot, who worked for many years as an English teacher, was appointed by the Second Level Support Service to bring all the English teachers' organisations under one umbrella. An evolution was taking place, and Kevin was the man who helped the diverse groups navigate their way towards a new beginning.

In 2010, the Irish National Organisation of the Teachers of English (INOTE) was established. In the words of a former Chairperson, Conor Murphy, "INOTE strives to retain the rigour of the subject through a CPD model aimed at teachers talking to teachers, of every teacher having a voice and every teacher being acknowledged as a professional." Tradition lives on...

“Too like the lightning” - INOTE’s Response to the now Shelved Leaving Cert Plans

by Patrick Huff
@Mr_Phuff



On the 28th of February 2023, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, officially announced her intention to “defer” a planned move of Leaving Certificate English Paper One to the end of fifth year for all students commencing Senior Cycle in August 2023. This decision to “defer” came almost a year after the initial announcement and scant information regarding what this move would actually comprise. However, within that time, we learned that the proposed move was unsupported by pedagogical evidence and many stakeholders.

INOTE was to the fore on this issue from the outset, arguing against changes that seemed “too rash, too unadvised, too sudden”. Little consideration seemed to have been given to the practicalities of such a change, especially regarding students choosing levels of study, the immutable “double helix” of language and literature (Kate Barry, June 2022) in the syllabus, and the developmental nature of Paper One skills throughout the entirety of Senior Cycle.

INOTE members were immediately surveyed and returned a clear repudiation of the plan - 96% against it, 96% believing the move to be damaging to students, 97% worried about degrading the links between Paper One and Paper Two skills, etc. These results gave INOTE’s Executive Committee a robust platform from which to advocate on its members’ behalf. Well-researched opinion pieces by the then INOTE Chairperson, Conor Murphy, (still available on www.inote.ie) led to positive media coverage, whilst letters to education spokespeople resulted in parliamentary questions. INOTE kept the discussion of the proposal alive throughout the summer and gave it prominence during the annual conference in late 2022. At this point, INOTE was invited to meet Department of Education officials.

This meeting took place in early November 2022, where a delegation from INOTE’s Executive Committee, led by the then INOTE Chairperson, Patrick Huff, met with DES officials and represented the concerns of its members. It is worth noting that these concerns were informed by years of experience on the ground in classrooms around the country and with the best interests of their students at heart. This meeting was followed by others, most significantly with our colleagues from An Gréasán. In early February 2023, the two subject associations, along with the ASTI and the TUI, published a powerful joint statement that urged an immediate withdrawal of the Minister’s proposal to move Paper One. It again cited the lack of pedagogical evidence and cautioned that the move was “flawed, educationally unsound and [would] increase stress among students”.

It was less than a month after the release of this joint statement that INOTE was pleased to welcome Minister Foley’s intention to “defer” the move. Whilst it is unclear whether “defer” is used euphemistically, this lack of clarity should itself encourage vigilance amongst INOTE members and all teachers of English. Get involved with your subject association. Stay involved. Fill in the surveys. Send emails. Take the opportunity to talk to each other at INOTE events.

Above all else, know that your voice on this issue was heard and that your experience and expertise were valued. Your unified voices were undoubtedly crucial in ensuring that students were not subjected to the stress and curtailment of opportunities for growth that this plan represented.



Discussing Chat GPT in the English Classroom



by Ruairi Nolan
@Rurs1

Some significant questions have been posed in our field, particularly with regard to assessment. Just how can we be sure work we receive is authentic and original?

As a secondary teacher, the concerns are less, given we know our students' work and the terminal exam is in a formal exam setting. However, with talk of continuous assessment on the horizon, it is a question we must reflect on. Certainly in the coming times.

Like in enterprise, with pedagogy, if you don't adapt and grow with the innovations going on around you, you may have missed a trick and may be left with that sense of what if? I started to become aware of ideas to harness AI's positives in the classroom, and frankly I have to say, using it with my sole priority being student engagement has been thrilling.

I have decided to forego my personal penchant for existential dread. It is time I moved towards accepting that AI is very much here to stay. So we may get on with it now and use it appropriately. The more I have used it the more I have appreciated there are many levels of human intelligence it simply can only aspire to imitate, nothing more.

It's Just Another Resource

Simply commanding it to take on the persona of whatever poet or character has allowed me to bring them straight into the room. My first attempts at this were thrilling to be fair. I used it initially with fifth and sixth years. Fifth years on completion of reading Hamlet and sixth years on completion of our final poet; WB Yeats.

I used it in two ways: hot-seating characters and the poet and to provide sample analysis. The work with Yeats typifies the pros and cons to using AI in the classroom, so let's look at that. The students were enthralled to be able to ask the poet any questions, within reason.

Questions such as What was your motivation for writing September 1913? were answered with the expected content. Seeing the answers typing along the screen as we all watched really was poetry in motion: through personification. In reality the answers were not much different to anything a quick Google search would bring you, or even a quick glance at the auld text books.

The difference is, this is simply a new way of engaging our students who have been surrounded with talk of ChatGPT. I see our job as secondary teachers as being about making our subject content accessible to students, and this technology does that in a new and vibrant way.

Students Like to Know Best

I'm sure we are all aware students like hearing about mistakes previous students made in exams or essays. Working for the SEC, I have picked up a cautionary tale or two over the years. We all like hearing others fared worse than ourselves. We usually rush to assure ourselves that we would never do that. Students, of course, are no different. So using ChatGPT to write a sample essay in front of us is a great way of showing students how easy it is to let your analysis fall short.

Having assigned the essay, it was beneficial to put ChatGPT to the same task. Going through it paragraph by paragraph, the students were able to highlight specific deficiencies the essay had. Looking at the introduction it was clear the AI had just rephrased the essay title in numerous ways repeatedly whilst actually saying very little. They spotted this instantly. It was simply another way of showing the success criteria for our essay. I simply had to ask the students to not have me read this from them.

It was likewise for each paragraph of analysis; the students highlighted exactly how it was lacking. Again, a marking scheme had been engaged with and assimilated by the class. It's limitations, it's important we remember that it is limited, were easily picked up on. We were playing the computer in chess, and beating it. Who doesn't like outsmarting a computer in a game from time to time? This was no different, so it was refreshingly engaging in my experience.

Which is where I came in, it was up to me to ensure no false information was given or if it was that I highlighted that and thus showed its shortcomings to the class.

It is at our Disposal

I think it is incumbent on us to consider using such technology in our classrooms as it isn't going anywhere and we must accept that. It is not something to be feared, or dismissed as some sort of tool to make slides for us and thus cheat at our job. It is simply another way of delivering content and getting our students to access our content.

Fears around assessment, as mentioned prior, should be assuaged by the fact we know our students. I have long since enjoyed playing detective when I get work from a student that's clearly a sample essay. Even if typing the first sentence into the search engine usually does the trick and thus frustrates my thirst to go on a quest alas. It is not that I don't rate my students, it is that I know how they write and therefore know when they've pressed the panic button.

I never viewed it as cheating; rather an insight into their lack of confidence of their ability. A cry for help. ChatGPT is no different to the long held threat of sample essays. It is after all, a glorified search engine in itself, and we must remember that.

As teachers, we are still very much the go-between for our students and the wonderful content in our fields of study. Spotting its mistakes and limitations is no different to assessing content before we bring it to our classes. Getting students to spot errors in quotes used etc, is further reinforcing of students' content knowledge.

We should not fear AI as risking our being disposed of, rather it is a cracking tool simply at our disposal.



Fundamental ideas for First Years!

by Lorraine Dillon
@LorraineDillo14



"Having fun is the best way to learn."

Albert Einstein

There's something endearing about the shiny newness of first years, smothered in their too-big uniforms, giant schoolbags perched on their backs giving them the appearance of lopsided turtles. Not for them the shaken Coke bottle chaos of the second years, the swaggering arrogance of the third years, the insouciance of the Seniors. The system has yet to burden them with CBAs and State exams. These are their halcyon days, if only they only just knew it!

With that in mind, it is the ideal time to reclaim the fun in our subject, to counter the it's just reading and writing and filling in workbooks mentality that many of them carry from primary school. So, while we read the novel, study the poems, and follow the curriculum, there are often opportunities to engage in enjoyable creative activities. If the Cigire asks, there is a sound pedagogical reasoning behind them!

Mostly, they've evolved from organic moments in the classroom. So, there's no Kahoot or Blooket in sight here, just some old-school ideas. It's not an exhaustive or prescriptive list, but it may spark similar ideas for you. The students have fun creating and sharing them, which promotes a positive learning environment while I sneakily upskill them...

Sultans of Ping, F.C. aka Where's Me ____ (insert lost item here).

Showing my age with this one- and yes, I do make them listen to it! It is inevitable that at some point, a child will arrive at your door having lost something relatively important. Then we use 20 questions to help them retrace their steps to find the jumper/bag/journal etc. Mystery solved -hopefully-it's a creative opportunity. For example: Missing Posters /Mini narratives/Radio ads appealing to witnesses/ Detective reports/ Hyperbolic impact statements, the permutations are endless.

Ancestral Mathematics

This is one that never ceases to uncover fascinating facts about their families. From uncles with glass eyes to renegades and heroes, when they go home and ask for an interesting story from their extended family tree, they return with fantastic tales! I put it all up on the board so we can see everyone's contribution.

Sometimes, I'll ask them to write a report/ narrative/article, etc. on their own person; sometimes, I'll ask them to pick someone else's, get chatting and then create. It also allows for cross-curricular links, which is an additional bonus, as it can be tied into other subjects.



Beat the Teacher

(not literally!)

So, sometimes, their task is to take something we've studied and try to catch me out with topic-related questions. My only caveat is that they must know the answer before the game begins, making it a good revision tool. It's remarkable how determined they are to win. Inevitably, the group will band together in their quest to dethrone the evil queen!

Set the Test

Sometimes, instead of a formal summative assessment, I'll use this instead. They each become the creator of a test that will be given to another classmate. The instructions are simple: design a test based on my assigned topic and make it challenging!

They can use traditional questions/make crosswords/cloze tests/word searches/If this is the answer, what is the question, etc. They must be able to complete their own test. The added bonus of this approach is that students who may find English challenging have the opportunity to select an approach that suits them and show what they know.

The Secret Life Of... Teachers!

I'll show them a clip from the Secret Life of Pets and then ask them to imagine the secret life of teachers/teenagers/ footballers -any group that may resonate with them. The teacher is usually quite funny; the caveat is that you may not write anything unkind or wouldn't want the teacher in question to read.

The Evil Twin/ Doppelganger

My surname is frequently misspelled (indeed, even in the last INOTE magazine!), so when it happens in class, I tell them that's my evil twin...this leads to a fun descriptive writing piece where they create their own evil doppelganger.

We could be Heroes

Not just a Bowie classic, but a lovely exercise in discussion, reflection, and writing. We'll read and think about what a hero is. Then, I ask them to select someone they admire in real life and write a letter to them, which is then posted. Sometimes, if they get a written response, it's brought into class and shared. One even had their letter read out online by a TikTokker they'd selected; there was high excitement in the classroom as we watched that clip over and over again.

There are lots of opportunities for bringing fun into the room, while still fostering academic skills, genre awareness, and developing their thinking, writing, and oral competencies. In the opinion of this elder lemon, that can only be a good thing.



Inclusion in a Diverse English Classroom

by Kevin Curran
Author of "Youth"
@Kevlcurran



No student fails a test for me in 1st year.

There are no tests for my students in the first months of 1st year.

Every student (regardless of the quality of their work) should feel good about themselves and their writing after a few days in class.

All students should look forward to English after only a few classes.

Nouns, Adjectives and Verbs are the core topics for the first week in class.

Then, we focus solely on Adjectives. We make sure we are clear on what an adjective is and the role of an adjective. Then, we work on sentences to find adjectives. Then, we write sentences with adjectives.

Adjectives are the key to Creative Writing in 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, 5th year and 6th year.

Adjectives are details. If I can train the students to bring specific details to their sentences, they are halfway there to being good writers.

Once the student has a firm grasp of adjectives and can creatively describe objects, people and places with their own unique and imaginative adjectives, we move on to similes.

If adjectives are the foundation blocks for creative writing, similes are the solid floor from which everything else starts to stand.

Similes require imagination, detail, perseverance and thought. All first-year students must create their own clear and descriptive sentences using their own personal, unique experiences of the world. These personal, unique experiences of the world are then used to create their own personal, unique similes.

No two similes can be repeated in class.

Similes are the key to developing the student's creative, critical and analytical skills in 1st year.

Once the student has mastered similes and can spot them and see how they work, we write simple descriptive paragraphs about any topic or object the student chooses. The student must use a simile in every sentence.

The descriptive paragraphs are made to resemble poems by changing the shape of the paragraph with the application of simple run-on lines.

This demystifies poetry early in the student's school life.

The student then adds a picture to the poem poster, and that poster goes up on the wall.

Within the first few weeks of the year, the 1st year student has made one piece of art that encompasses adjectives, similes, descriptive paragraphs, poetry and art. That piece is then displayed on the wall. If the student wants, they can leave their piece of work anonymous. This frees them of any self-consciousness. Regardless, the student is now part of the room's fabric, the school. Every other class that comes into the room sees this work.

The student then feels like they belong.

That is how I first teach creative writing to a diverse classroom in the opening weeks of the year.

Everyone creates, everyone succeeds, everyone's individual outlook on life is celebrated, and everyone belongs.

Developing an Understanding of L2LP in the English Classroom

Lisa Kelly
Team Leader L1LP/L2LP
@oide_L1_L2LPs



As stated in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, pg. 23, Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) are designed for a small number of students with particular special educational needs. L2LPs are designed to provide curricular access to students with learning disabilities in the low mild to high moderate range of abilities. In a typical post-primary school, they may amount to a very small number of students.

L2LPs are essentially designed around priority learning units (PLUs) that focus on the social, personal and pre-vocational skills that prepare students for further study, work and life. The 5 PLUs that have been developed by the NCCA and are broadly aligned with Level 2 of the NFQ are Communication and Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Care, Living in a Community and Preparing for Work. Further details on the L2LPs can be found using the QR code.



Teachers should collaborate with school leaders and the special education teaching (SET) team to plan and create individual Level 2 Junior Cycle learning programmes for students in the context of mainstream classes alongside their peers and, where appropriate, through small groups or one-to-one classes. In this podcast, English teacher Eimear White speaks about the integration of Level 2 into her Level 3 English classroom.

Subject teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all students in their classes. English teachers should choose learning outcomes for students based on their Student Support File (SSF) and their individual Junior Cycle programme.



There is a Junior Cycle English planning template for Levels 2 & 3 available here. Subject teachers could complete their planning to include learning outcomes from PLUs and/or Short Course strands in the context of their English curriculum. Teachers can also use this linking document for suggested links to learning outcomes (LOs) from the English and L2LPs, to support this process.



Over the three years in junior cycle, students engaging with L2LPs should assemble evidence of their learning in a portfolio. Teachers collaborating with the SET team should agree on time frames to assess student learning and gather evidence for portfolios, review, and report on students' progress. This Assessment and Reporting Plan may support creating this time frame.

Teachers may design an assessment task to assess several Level 2 LOs with a similar theme or assess an individual LO in isolation. Teachers should set success criteria which are established to use in judging the evidence of learning. Examples of evidence of learning that might be included in the portfolio are written work, project work, photographs, teacher observation sheets, and video or audio recordings. There are resources to support Level 2 portfolios available here



Students should engage in Classroom-Based Assessments(CBA) with their peers where possible. Teachers should align LOs from the Level 2 PLUs and the Short Courses with the students' CBAs. Evidence of learning which is assessed during the CBA process can form part of the student's portfolio for their Level 2 PLUs. Reporting on these students' achievements within their CBAs can happen in two ways: if the student engages fully with the CBA as outlined in the Subject Assessment Guidelines, their CBA undergoes the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process, and a descriptor is awarded to their CBA. This descriptor can be reported on the students' Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) even without SEC exam results or the student engages with a subject CBA, which is modified to best meet the individual student's strengths and needs. This modified CBA will not undergo the SLAR process and will not appear on the JCPA as a subject CBA, but it can be reported in the Other Areas of Learning (OLA) of the JCPA if appropriate.

Occasionally, there may be a student undertaking L2LPs for whom recognition of learning in one or two subjects at Level 3 is also accessible. Some students who are engaging with L2LPs may engage with the learning at Level 3 in the English classroom and may sit the Junior Cycle English exam. These students should be accommodated to undertake learning at both levels so all of their achievements may be recognised.

There are a number of resources and supports specifically designed for English teachers available here



Further information and support around the L2LPs and Junior Cycle English is available through info@oide.ie



THE BENEFITS OF GRAPHIC NOVELS

by Graeme O'Brien
@Gobrien128

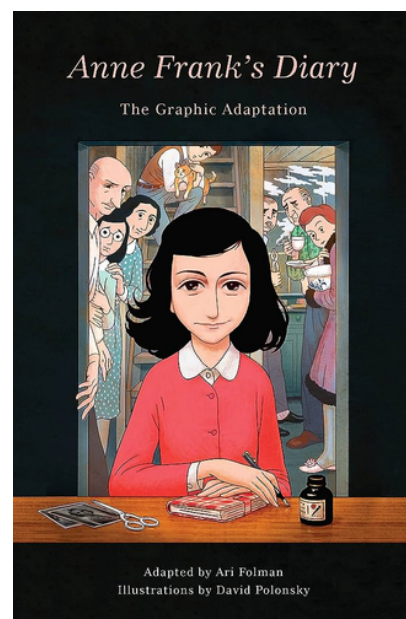
Graphic novels have a history of being looked down upon as a lesser form of literature, being viewed as “picture” books instead of actual books. However, these pictures are what make graphic novels the perfect gateway into literature for Junior Cycle students, be they children who absorb the written word like a sponge and have the appetite for another medium or children who up until now had an aversion to reading and have the potential to be swayed.

It is important to dispel any false assumptions teachers may have about graphic novels. Firstly, it should be made clear that they are not comic books, despite how much they might look like them to the uninitiated. Don't worry; no one is asking you to consider reading Spider-Man or Aquaman with your 3rd Years. Comic books are serialised publications, usually twenty-two to twenty-four pages long, released monthly and have “arcs.” These story arcs usually run for six issues at a time with some exceptions, meaning that in real-time, fans of the character follow the current story for up to six months on average and encounter cliffhangers at the end of every issue to entice them to keep reading. In many ways, they are very much like the prose pulp fiction of years gone by.

What are usually incorrectly labelled as graphic novels in your local Eason's or Waterstones are collections of these story arcs called “trade paperbacks,” these are what spring to mind first when we think of graphic novels.

Graphic novels themselves are much more literal - they are novels that have been given visual components. They are published in their complete form and are not serialised, therefore omitting unnecessary cliffhangers and saving the reader from enduring excessive exposition at regular intervals. Often there will be no omniscient narrator in these texts describing the setting or character actions, and it is in the quiet moments where graphic novels really shine. The adage of “show, don't tell” is most relevant here, as the focus in terms of reading is purely on the dialogue - meanwhile, the readers' eyes are treated to a visual representation of where the characters find themselves. This can be a full-page spread of a countryside or cityscape, an intimate close-up of a subtle character action, or even a panel-by-panel breakdown of a conversation that shows the changing facial expressions of its participants. This list of examples sets the stage for the kind of intradisciplinary approach an English department should always aspire towards.

Just as we help build our students' voice to augment their functional and creative writing, here we can harness their knowledge of stagecraft built up from prescribed drama and film to add another dimension to their study of a novel. What is the "camera" focused on? Who is centre stage? Why are we seeing a close-up of this person during a heartfelt conversation? What does that facial expression suggest? How is any of this relevant? The answer is simple. Even for a student who may not be a recreational reader, the skills they have developed from studying a film from the list of prescribed texts can be easily transferred to their study of a graphic novel. It is also important to remember that studying a graphic novel is not a literary crutch to prop up a student who struggles with sustained reading - a rising tide raises all ships. Making the links to film will help to build up a student who does not regularly read, yes, but it will also give a significant boost to the avid bookworms in your class who now have a whole host of other observations to discuss beyond the literary and another facet of their text to analyse.



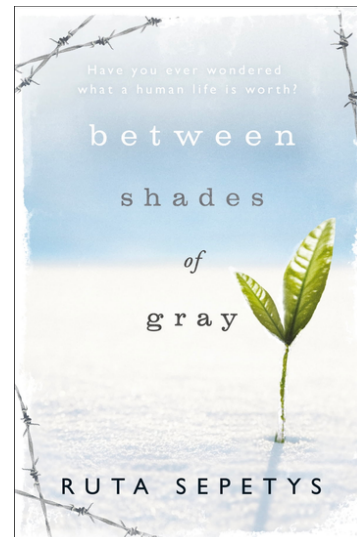
The final word on incorporating graphic novels into your English class should be this - they are a medium in their own right, not a watered-down version of novels. Invariably they do have a smaller word count than their prose-only counterparts, yes, but the wealth of discussion that can be had on their visual representations of the narrative cannot be understated. When you also factor in their ability to open the floodgates to the world of literature for reading-averse students, links to other parts of the curriculum, and the sheer enjoyment factor of reading a story in full-colour glory, it becomes apparent that these lighter texts are worth their weight in gold.

Alan Moore is the G.O.A.T.

Reflecting on 'Between Shades of Gray'

by Peig O'Connor
@peigconnor

Tackling the roman-a-clef genre at Junior Cycle is a unique task requiring the teacher to consider defining features of the chosen historical fiction discourse. 'Between Shades of Gray' first found itself amongst Junior Cycle regular prose like 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and 'Of Mice and Men' in the text list of '18 - '23, and speaking from my own experience, it seems to have been well received. Lina, the protagonist, is a believable narrator, and readers have been able to relate to her character as she makes sense of the horrors of the world in which she has found herself through art.



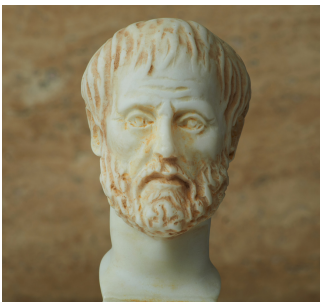
Ruta Sepetys, the daughter of Lithuanian immigrants, succeeds in placing her text somewhere between Levi's autobiographical 'If This is a Man' and Boyne's 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' as the genocide of the Baltic people is brought to life. Very much aware of her target audience, Sepetys places Lina and her family at the heart of the plot. Although we are constantly reminded of Stalin and the war happening outside the microcosmic world of the Vilkas family, the focus remains on the innocent victims: women and children.

As an English teacher, I constantly strive to nurture students who read for pleasure because, as we all know, the more you read, the better you write. Right? Perhaps not. While wanting the class to root for the heroine Lina, to empathise with "krasivaya" Elena and to decry the callous NKVD, we must strike a balance between engaging with the text by way of genuine personal responses and ensuring our students are 'exam ready'. I faced this dilemma recently upon finishing the novel and inviting students to give immediate reactions through free writing. While listening to their personal responses, I reminded myself of the pillars of 'teaching the novel 101' - character, theme, setting, etc., yet noted that these aren't necessarily being specifically asked in the exam. Indeed, the exam itself is impossible to predict; the two previous years signify a greater emphasis being placed on the pathos and an innate relationship with the text. 2022 questioned candidates "how a novel or play had a long-lasting effect on your thoughts or feelings" while June's exam measured "the art of good storytelling". Although both questions absolutely encompass the pillars of 'teaching the novel,' perhaps the students could be given greater freedom in considering what they predominately believe the text is about and the author's intentions in succeeding in doing so. I believe a movement away from the prescriptive PQE towards the What/How/Why has been pivotal in students gaining a greater insight into what the author is trying to do. In his blog post, 'But, what does the text do?' Andrew Atherton illustrates the importance of getting students to consider authorial intent and using this to frame their reaction to a text.

I posed this question to my class: what is 'Between Shades of Gray' about? Is it about the universal strength of motherhood? The plight of the Baltic people? The complex relationship between preserving integrity and preserving life? At the end of it all, what is Sepetys trying to do? This alignment with the author gives students autonomy over their personal responses and finds value in their immediate reactions. By choosing the genre of the roman-a-clef, Sepetys gave a name to the nameless and a face to the faceless but, in Lina's words, so that

Creating an Active and Accessible Drama Class

by Eoin Martin
@EoinMartin99



Greek philosopher Aristotle once wrote, "For the things we have to learn before we do them, we learn by doing", justifying that in order to gain and maintain a good educational output for dues, an active learning approach is most effective. Considering this, I have found this approach most beneficial, especially when teaching Shakespearean dramas and older texts that some students struggle to understand. Adopting an active approach, which employs the elements of Drama in Education, evidently has a positive effect on student learning and student output.

In this article, I will explore and discuss how an active learning methodology can enhance the learning experience for each student, and how it amplifies student output, understanding and attainment.

Many students find it difficult to initially grasp the language of drama, thus resulting in their lesser understanding of significant plot points and characteristics. To combat this, I have used various drama techniques that ensure that the material is accessible for each student. These methods maintain students' active engagement and involvement throughout the lesson because they are actively engaged in their own learning.

Drama is a fantastic tool that can be used to heighten not only student attainment and engagement but also the level of student understanding, particularly when looking at Shakespearean texts. In my classroom, I introduce the students to the conventions of Shakespearean language through active learning methods. A resource that I have found especially useful is 'Pop Sonnets' by Erik Didriksen. This book comprises a broad range of modern-day songs in a Shakespearean sonnet format. I give a group of students a sonnet each, and they perform it to the class. This activity introduces the students to Shakespearean language whilst allowing them to explore their own popular culture.

LXI.

My reputation's sown with rumors' threads:
it's said that I carouse, am void of wit,
and have amassed more beaus than Hydra's heads
yet cannot make a single one commit.
Although my honor's by their words maligned,
I'll waste no effort t' have their tales disproved.
Instead, I'll dance to music in my mind;
my malady's by melodies improved.
For just as bakers must their loaves create
and thespians put on their fictive acts,
the ones who live in scorn shall always hate –
I'll from my shoulders shake their vile attacks.
— O gentleman well-coiffed! I thee entreat
to hither come and dance to this sick beat.

Taylor Swift, "Shake It Off"
igoodnotgood.com

LXXXV.

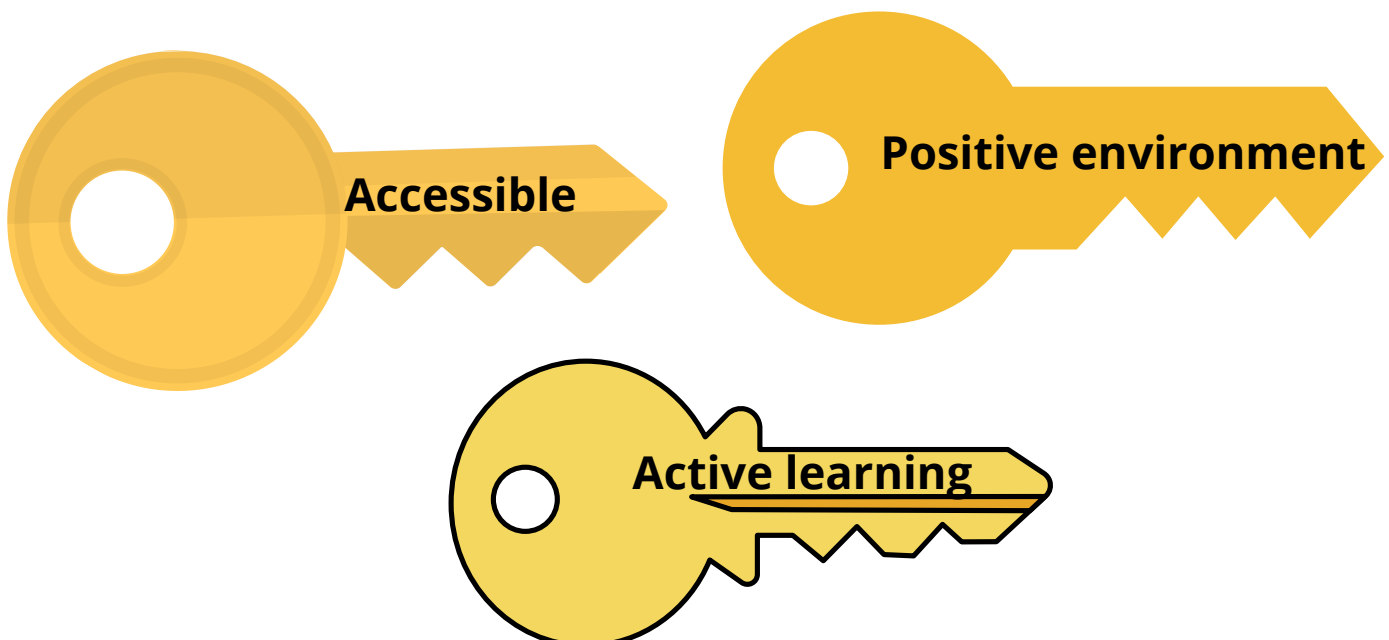
Now that the students have a grasp of what Shakespearean language looks like, drama in education also comes in handy when ensuring that the students understand what's going on in the text. Using drama exercises to further explore key moments and characters greatly influences the learning of each student, and it allows for overall more attainment and understanding.

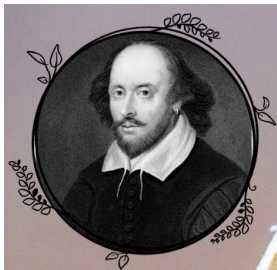
For example, when trying to ensure that students fully understand the actions and characteristics of the central characters, I use methods such as 'hot seating' to allow students the opportunity explore the characters further. In this active exercise, one student volunteers to 'play' the character while the rest of the students ask them various questions. Not only does this method allow students to think further about certain characters, but it also allows them to explore the text in a more active and enjoyable manner.



Although getting students up to the top of the classroom to perform, especially a Shakespearean text can prove to be a difficult task, I like to make use of student performance, especially when analysing and exploring the key scenes within a play. One resource I find extremely useful is the series of books called 'OMG Shakespeare' by Courtney Carbone and Brett Wright. This series of books translates several prominent Shakespearean plays into a text message format. Getting the students to perform key scenes in this format creates a far less daunting experience for them. The worry of mispronouncing those old words is gone, and students can access their studied texts in a language that they are used to.

Studying a Shakespearean text is a daunting experience for both the teacher and the student. Through my own experience, using Drama in Education and a more active learning approach makes this encounter far more manageable. Exploring a Shakespearean text, or any text, can be made more accessible when an active method is adopted. Not only does this heighten student understanding, but it also makes lessons more enjoyable for the student and the teacher.





Shakespeare's Italian



Story

by Pauline Kelly

SHAKESPEARE

First broadcast on Sunday, Miscellany, RTÉ Radio 1, on 23rd of April 2023

<https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/sunday-miscellany/programmes/2023/0423/1378712-sunday-miscellany-sunday-23-april-2023/>



Sunday April 23rd 2023, is the anniversary both of Shakespeare's birth in 1564, and of his burial in 1616. Church records show that on April 26th 1564, he was baptised; in 1582, aged 18, he married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway, who bore him a daughter, Susanna, six months later; in 1585, their twins Hamnet and Judith were baptised; and in 1595, aged just 11, Hamnet died. Sometime in his early twenties, Shakespeare left his home and family, and we lost sight of him until his name appeared in 1592 as a playwright living in London. How did this son of a glovemaker born in a small country town become the most quoted, most translated, most performed, and best-known playwright in English literature?

His whereabouts and the life he led during those lost years in his mid-twenties are a mystery. Might he have made the month-long sailing trip to take him to the spectacular glories of 16th-century Italian cities? The question must be asked because he set so many plays in Italy; in Rome, Genoa, Verona, Padua, and of course, glamorous, fashionable, romantic, cosmopolitan, multicultural Venice, whose wealthiest citizens lived luxurious lives in fabulous palaces.



Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* may be based on *Il Pecorene*, an Italian story which had many elements of his play; a beautiful heiress, a bid to win her in marriage, a Jewish money lender, a merchant who defaults on the repayment of a loan with a pound of flesh as the forfeit, and a courtroom drama with a twist engineered by a smart woman disguised as a lawyer. If he did use this story, he must have read it in Italian because it didn't exist in translation until 1632.

His knowledge of Venice was remarkable. He knew that trade was done on the Rialto Bridge; that Venice was famous for banking and international commerce; that gondolas floated on its canals; that Venetians celebrated Carnival with masked parties, music, and flaming torches lighting up its streets; that it imported silks, spices and luxury goods that made merchants like Antonio fabulously wealthy, that it traded with Tripoli, the Caribbean, and other far off places that sounded exotic to his London audience; that it had a Jewish quarter; and that its legal contracts were binding.

Shakespeare asks fundamental questions.

The Merchant of Venice tells a story about how a society treats its outsiders. The story might happen in any city where different cultures collide. Shylock, the ultimate outsider, a Jew in a city of Christians, is spat upon, despised and laughed at, even in his hour of greatest devastation when his daughter elopes with a Christian.



Al Pacino as Shylock in Michael Radford's adaptation of The Merchant of Venice

This 430-year-old play, studied today by tens of thousands of Irish secondary school students, poses a challenge to us in our age of global migration, raising uncomfortable questions about our sense of decency and fair play for everyone.

The Merchant's golden circle of rich, elegant people look after their friends, lend one another money, celebrate each other's happiness. They bend the rules for their own, helping a gold digger to disguise his girlfriend who steals money and jewellery from her father for their elopement. One of them is even willing to die for a friend. But they treat outsiders with contempt; even royal visitors such as the eloquent, formidable Prince of Morocco.



In the play's courtroom climax, we see an outsider, Shylock, whose feelings of isolation and oppression have become so unbearable that he is willing to watch his persecutor bleed to death. For a brief moment, Shylock thinks he has the power; holds all the cards. But, in a brutal counterattack, Portia, having spoken a heart-stopping speech about mercy, mercilessly crushes him with the brute force of special laws against minorities.

Lynn Collins as Portia

There were hundreds of plays on stage in Shakespeare's London. A handful are still performed, the Merchant being one of them. Why? Because, I think, it asks questions about how we behave, how humane we really are, and how we treat people who are different.

400 years after his burial in Stratford, Shakespeare asks us to look at ourselves and question who and what we are.

Who calls the shots in any group of people?

Who has the power and how do they use or abuse it?

Study comic books for the Junior Cycle exam?!

The previous article on incorporating graphic novels into your Junior Cycle English classroom focused on the benefits of doing so and how it can be of value to both advanced and non-readers alike due to its potential for an intradisciplinary approach and drawing from other parts of the course. In this article, the focus will now be on two specific texts, one which is a prescribed text for the purpose of examination and one which is a recommended read for 1st Years.

One option for tackling a graphic novel at Junior Cycle is *THIS ONE SUMMER* by Mariko Tamaki, a coming-of-age story about two teenage friends, Rose and Windy, during a summer spent in a small beach town called Awago. Criticised for its occasionally-graphic content (excuse the pun), *THIS ONE SUMMER* can be used in the final examination and connects with themes such as growing up, loss, and love. It will take a diligent teacher to make a judgement call on whether or not it is appropriate for their class. Still, it is worth remembering that it may not be any better or worse than the racist language found in *OF MICE AND MEN* or the strong violence prevalent in *THE OUTSIDERS*.

Regardless, it can be held up as a perfect example of blending the written and illustrated word. In one sample page here, a host of minor details are conveyed without written reference, such as the dust billowing behind the car or the fact that the driver is married due to the visible wedding ring on his hand.

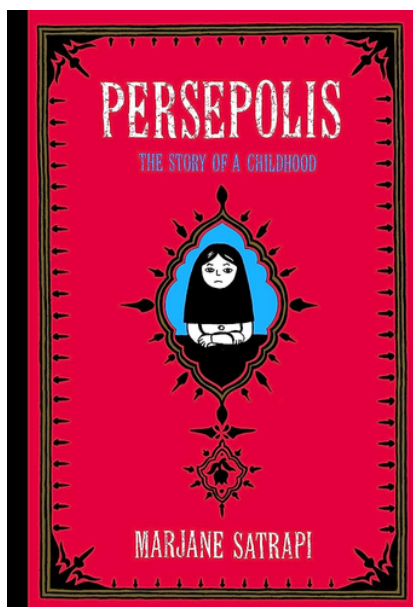
NO, THEY'RE GRAPHIC NOVELS.

by Graeme O'Brien
@Gobrien128

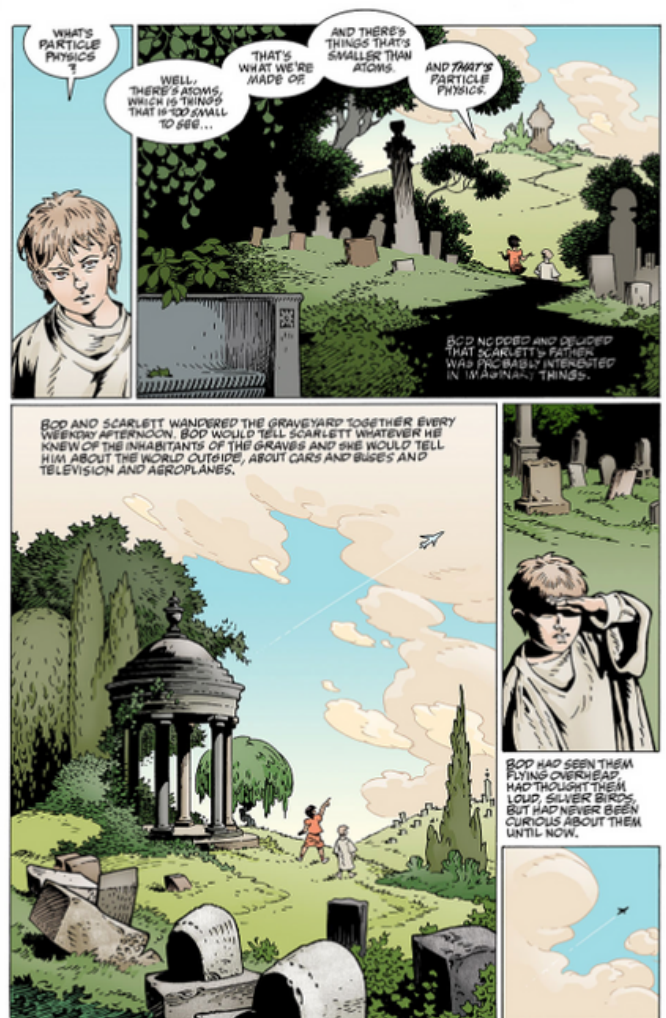


At first glance, the dialogue is read and taken at face value; however, on a second pass, the more subtle details can be recognised and used to create discussion around the scene. Why does the artist focus on a squirrel diving into the long grass? This shows that the characters are away from any urban sprawl and are out in nature where the grass is unkept and local wildlife is thriving. What does the dusty road say about the setting? As the title suggests, it is hot, dry weather and likely the height of summer. Why are there shadows cast through the treeline all over this page? To illustrate the fact that the sun is high in the sky and uninterrupted by clouds, all of this could be conveyed in paragraph-long descriptions in a prose novel, interspersed with the same dialogue found here, but by showing us this instead of telling us we can separate the two and use our own voice to serve the function of the omniscient narrator as we interpret what the artist is showing us.

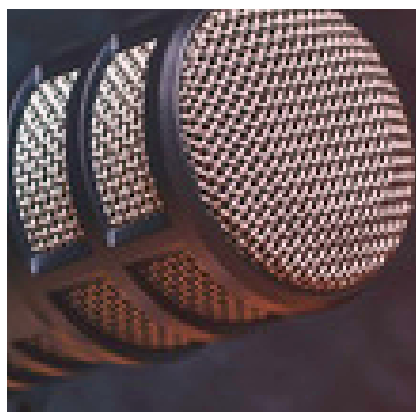
If the controversy of *THIS ONE SUMMER* outweighs its positives, a safer bet for a 1st Year group would instead be *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK* by P. Craig Russel, adapted in two parts from the novel by Neil Gaiman of the same name. Following a young boy who was the survivor of a massacre at his family home and taken in by the ghosts who inhabit the local graveyard, the novel is not as grisly as it sounds. When combined with the wonderful full-colour of its illustrated adaption, *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK* Vol. 1 is a prime candidate for gauging the response of a 1st Year class to the medium before deciding on studied texts for 2nd and 3rd Year, with the added benefit of introducing them to some of the analytical techniques that will serve them in good stead anyway when they encounter their studied film. By introducing students to this text in 1st Year, you are not only introducing an intradisciplinary approach early on, but you are also broadening their horizons as they progress through their Junior Cycle years. Maybe they will be inspired to seek out Vol. 2 on their own time and see how the story ends, or even seek out the original novel by Gaiman himself. And who knows, even if they never get to study *THIS ONE SUMMER*, the techniques and skills that they pick up from reading *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK* Vol. 1 all the way back in 1st Year could help them out in 6th Year while gearing up for the dreaded English Paper 2 when *PERSEPOLIS* by Marjane Satrapi inevitably makes its way back onto the course.



While the list of prescribed texts is still limited in terms of the number of graphic novels on offer, given that we have now seen at least one text offered at both Junior and Senior Cycle, it is safe to say that they are more than a fleeting experiment by the Department. A familiarity with these pilot texts will serve the diligent English teacher well as more texts from the zeitgeist make their way onto the course, as has already been seen with texts such as *INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE*, *KNIVES OUT*, and *WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING*, texts which will be studied in classrooms across the country less than five years after being released commercially.



In years to come, there is no reason why the medium of graphic novels cannot become a more prominent part of the Junior Cycle English course, and getting in on the ground floor and incorporating them into our classrooms now can only set our students up for success.



SACRED HEART SECONDARY SCHOOL, CLONAKILTY
PRESENTS

SHSS

by Caragh Bell
@BellCaragh

PODCAST



Technology's rapid evolution has impacted education hugely, and podcasting is one of the latest technologies to emerge in our schools. Accessible and engaging, this new tool is on its way to becoming mainstream in Transition Year all over the country. I work in Sacred Heart Secondary School in Clonakilty, and we were one of the first schools to introduce a student-led podcast in September 2021. In collaboration with an online digital education company, Flux Learning Ltd, we were a trailblazer in a medium that is now becoming one of the forefront technologies in education.

Our podcast is called The SHSS Podcast and is now in its fifth season. I have a class of TY journalists, and together we collaborate by recruiting interviewees, preparing questions, and scheduling interviews. The Leaving Cert examination and the points race dominate our students' lives. Transition Year, by its nature, encourages independent, self-directed learning. Podcasting is certainly an exciting and relevant experience for students as it helps them to develop research and networking skills by building self-confidence and highlighting career pathways beyond the CAO. It also enhances their digital literacy skills as they become adept at video conferencing, sound checks, microphone techniques, and graphic design for branding. The diversity of guests gives the students real-world experience.

To date, we have had an array of interesting people, such as Louise O'Neill, David Puttnam, Paul Cunningham, Bill Liao, and Holly Cairns TD, to name a few. Through podcasting, the students can see that the education system is narrow in focus and that the points race does not adequately measure talent and aptitude. Success is determined differently in the real world.

The students research the guests and make out the questions, and my role is to coordinate and produce the podcasts. I encourage the students to ask ad-lib questions during the interview if they want to probe further on a topic. However, it is imperative to reiterate that any such questions should suit the mood of the conversation and, crucially, be respectful in nature. When we interviewed the famous producer, David Puttnam, one of the students asked him an unscripted question at the end of the interview. She said:

Who is the most famous person in your contacts?

He laughed and quipped that most of his friends had passed on and then mentioned Princess Diana and Audrey Hepburn, resulting in two wide-eyed podcasters.

Everyone knows somebody worth interviewing. It doesn't have to be someone famous; one of my favourite SHSS podcasts is with a local historian. Our objective is to hear stories from all walks of life: from composers to writers, entrepreneurs to scientists. Students can also interview other students who have done remarkable things, thus showcasing their achievements. You could adopt a cross-curricular and thematic approach. I started a daughter podcast called 'My Career and Me' last year in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellor. We interview past pupils from various fields, and these stories are an excellent resource for Leaving Cert students, filled with practical advice. The opportunities are endless.

However, there are challenges to podcasting. The equipment, the editing software, and the soundproofing of a room can be expensive. The sound quality is essential if you want it to be taken seriously. Another challenge is gaining a steady and loyal listenership. Since the pandemic, there has been a sense of podcast fatigue. The market is saturated, and people are slow to engage with new podcasts.



At the end of 2022 and 2023, I surveyed the journalists about podcasts and school journalism in general. 86% said that they would pursue a career in journalism in the future. From my standpoint, being school journalists has fostered a sense of ownership and pride in these students. They feel like veritable stakeholders in the school's running as they are active members of a thriving PR team. Being the voice of the student body gives a sense of responsibility.

80% found podcasting a worthwhile experience as they felt that they could use these skills in the future. All said that their communication skills improved as they had to interact with strangers and network with others to secure guests. When I asked what worked well with regard to the podcasts, the responses varied from increasing self-confidence to effective teamwork.

One student said that it had improved her ability to listen. Another said she 'loved hearing inspiring stories, like, how there's a path for everyone.'

Podcasting is essentially storytelling. It records life events, thoughts, experiences, and passions. This holistic approach to learning builds confidence, literacy and empowers student's voice. It is a break from the pressures of exams where students acquire new life skills beyond the textbook. It focuses on the individual rather than just the academic, broadens students' worldview, and is motivating and engaging.





Creating a Positive Library Environment

by Dearbhla Cussen

"In the dusty glow of the Dewey Decimal System, the Librarian, let's call her Linda, revels in the certainty of it all.

Damn, a dog-ear. At that moment, she wishes she had chosen another career, maybe engineering, invent an iron to smooth out the crinkles and wrinkles in the standard John Grisham.

Now, it is Tom Cruise that meanders through Linda's frontal lobe, mouth waters at the thought of a cocktail. What's that one with the sliver of a passion fruit? The book caddy's wheel needs a smidgeon of oil, the squeak is mocking her now. She considers tracking down Mark, the caretaker but thinks better of it.

He's just moved the musty mahogany bookcase to Miranda's corner, supplanted by a bunch of Billys.

Oh, there's the school bell, knelling classes to a close. Linda loves Seamus Heaney and tends to slow down to a halt while skulking near the Poetry section. After the class swap kerfuffle of Period 2, Linda shuffles on..."

At St. Leo's College in Carlow, my colleague Claire Tierney and I had a go at running our school library online during the lockdowns; the virtual is now trumped by the tangible, yet not ruled by a Dewey diktat. Claire is French, lives in beautiful Tipperary and has quite the commute to Carlow for work. Still, she runs our library in a manner that most S.M.E.s would be proud of. Scrap that. Napoleon would have her second in command. Library assistants were recruited, some of whom have been promoted to Library Leaders, the credentials of La Grande Armée on display in the form of red and gold badges; bicornes next, leading our Library Assistants, a mighty fifty volunteers who, most importantly, believe in the Cause.

These students recommend books to our student cohort at St. Leo's and are involved in cataloguing books, laminating them, lending books, and making diverse and inclusive book displays, all the while promoting our library with positive attitudes. We are so very proud of our Leaders and Assistants.

Our Library Leaders show all the initiative of mercenary Sharpshooters; being awarded the aforementioned Badges of Honor is absolutely deserved.

Our loyal patrons enjoy this amenity at break and lunchtimes while the room isn't being used as a classroom. We have some bucket chairs in this room, Eolas Library as it's known, to read and relax, and become more knowledgeable. We would love a space to call our own, for the students, designed by the students, of the students, beanbags and mugs of tea, a la Matilda.

Our Book Club has been held monthly since the Lockdowns, with animated discussions taking place via Zoom, a welcome lockdown legacy. Various authors have participated, such as Liz Kessler and Triona Campbell. Interested teachers are welcome to join these Book Club meetings.

As Claire's accomplice and an English teacher, our Alliance's agenda was the same: get the kids to read well. Tray beans.

So, what do the kids read today? Let's start with all the Mangas (Tokyo Ghoul, The Promised Neverland), Y.A. fiction (Heartstopper, Nothing More to Tell, etc.), Graphic novels...interjected by the occasional Henrik Ibsen, the languorous DH Lawrence, and parked up front on Billy no. 1, Mikhail Bulgakov.

Meanwhile, our Instagram page, @stleoscollegelibrary is a blockbuster in its way, students are following us. In. Their. Free. Time.

Naturally, we encourage all students to become members of their local library and advise them about the use of Borrowbox, a wonderful resource.

Publishers such as Harper Collins, Faber, Penguin, Hot Key Books and authors have connected with us and even offered us free books! We have achieved a lot in a short time with little by way of resourcing. We have also welcomed and advised aspiring teacher librarians from various schools nearby. Should it not be a policy for all public secondary schools to be IKEA'd, well-stocked and Dewey-free, ideally? And that there is an automatic post (A.P. Automatic) in the form of the Teacher/Librarian?

We are currently asking our local deputies to endorse the Right to be a Reader campaign spear-headed by a latter-day legion, Children's Books Ireland, hopefully, noted by the Department of Finance favourably this Budget Day.

"Meanwhile, Linda has had time to breathe. The library is just so. It isn't a quiet space; the bustle is bemusing as if books are shouting from the most famous Swedish fare since ABBA... books have yet to meet their Waterloo."



Debating with Concern

by Sarah Butler
@LittleMissB7

The first year that Scoil Dara participated in the Concern Debate competition was memorable for all the wrong reasons. We turned up to debate against neighbouring rivals Maynooth Post Primary with minimal preparation. We found the Maynooth team wearing matching red ribbons for World AIDS Day. They used analogies. They had a team tagline. But most of all, they were informed. I learned more about AIDS during the one hour of that debate than even growing up in the 80s could have taught me. I saw four future leaders in their team – informed, articulate, and destined to change the world. We slunk out with our tails between our legs. We would never underestimate the quality and standard of the Concern Debate competition again.

Two years later, in 2021, Scoil Dara made it to the Shield quarter-final. Each team stood on the shoulders of their predecessors as they and I learned more about the competition. In 2023, the Scoil Dara debate team made it to the top twelve teams in the country. When we got the email informing us that we had lost our final debate, getting knocked out the round before the quarter-finals, my captain confessed to me that he actually cried. I hadn't been far off myself. Having success in the competition involved months of lunchtimes spent discussing topics from SDGs to nuclear energy between bites of sandwiches and mouthfuls of tea. It involved practising our timing to avoid those crucial time penalties. It involved our captain prepping and participating in a debate less than a week after he finished his mock exams. In short, what the Concern Debates programme asks of those who participate – its mentors and its debaters – is one thing: dedication.

So why do it? Why do over 150 schools participate in this competition? I am a competitive person. But that's not the only thing that keeps me coming back, year after year, giving up my lunchtimes and evenings. It's also the surprising amount of satisfaction I gain from learning more about important topics. From China's relationship with Africa, to Just Stop Oil, it keeps me abreast of current events not directly linked to my subject area. But most of all, it is watching my students develop from tentative and anxious speakers, to confident and articulate would-be future leaders, that compels me to forego the staffroom in favour of the classroom for as long as we remain in the competition each year.

Inter-class debating is something I have always facilitated, and Concern's motions and resources – including podcasts – bring this to another level. I know many teachers find it challenging to encourage reluctant students to speak in front of the class. The CBA1 has really highlighted how fearful many of our students are when it comes to public speaking. But despite its challenges, I think it is an immeasurably important thing to teach our students. I take a motion and prepare it with two classes.

Then, I bring them together and randomly pull four names from each class. All other students act as judges. The criteria are rebuttal, content and presentation. Speeches need to be two minutes in duration for juniors, and three minutes for seniors. In our transition year English programme, we begin in September with a debate league across the four classes. Students' competitive natures mean that they really enjoy these battles. They often request a rematch if the debate didn't go their way. But in the process, they are developing countless skills – from research, to speech-writing, to the invaluable art of public speaking itself.

Also known as glossophobia, fear of public speaking is the world's number one phobia, believed to affect about 75% of people across the globe. Ireland offers a lot of public speaking and debate programmes. Scoil Dara has participated in Mace, UCD Junior Schools and Trinity PhilSpeaks. We were local finalists in Soroptimist Ireland in 2021 and won Maynooth University's Aoife Begley Memorial competition in 2022. All these competitions are excellent and unique. But the enormity of the Concern Debates programme, along with the standard of its teams and the quality of its motions, makes it one of the most rewarding.

Against Curricular Claustrophobia

by Kev Dowling
@KevDowling90

What was it that led us to become English teachers? What was it about the subject that we loved so much that we decided to spend our lives sharing our passion with students? It wasn't, I'd wager, a love of learning quotes, themes, essay structure and technique. Was it, instead, something intangible, approaching a sense of intrigue which lay in the space between texts we studied and our own lives? Could we understand it as the glory of the minutiae of human experience and creativity, the unexaminable and often inexpressible?

Over the last number of years, I've felt a looming sense of suffocation, standing in front of exam-year students, time melting rapidly away, reduced to teaching at the surface level of texts for fear that we may fail to cover material, and risk sending students into state exams unmoored from the safety of the classroom. The new Junior Cycle has only exacerbated this - too broad in its scope, too endlessly vague in its Learning Outcomes, determined it seems to stifle any opportunity to breathe, explore, and discover. Why should we comply? Where can we find space to disavow this shallowness of breath and of imagination?

It's something I struggle with, the feeling that we're forced into shortchanging students, the intangible is jettisoned, and quantity reigns supreme. Even that word 'cover' - that we are there only to work through a list, and to equip students with a general overview- with quantity. Although the dreaded 5th Year exams haven't materialised, the same can be said at Senior Cycle. We are forced ever further into the claustrophobia of the exam. I do understand that there is necessity in this until there is a radical overhaul of the CAO, but that doesn't remove that tightening knot in the stomach. We should be able to provide more opportunities for our students to develop a personal affinity towards the art of language and literature, of cinema and creative expression. Can we find time for an interval, can we walk away from the stage of State exams for a moment and carve out a little nook, a pocket of air for something else?

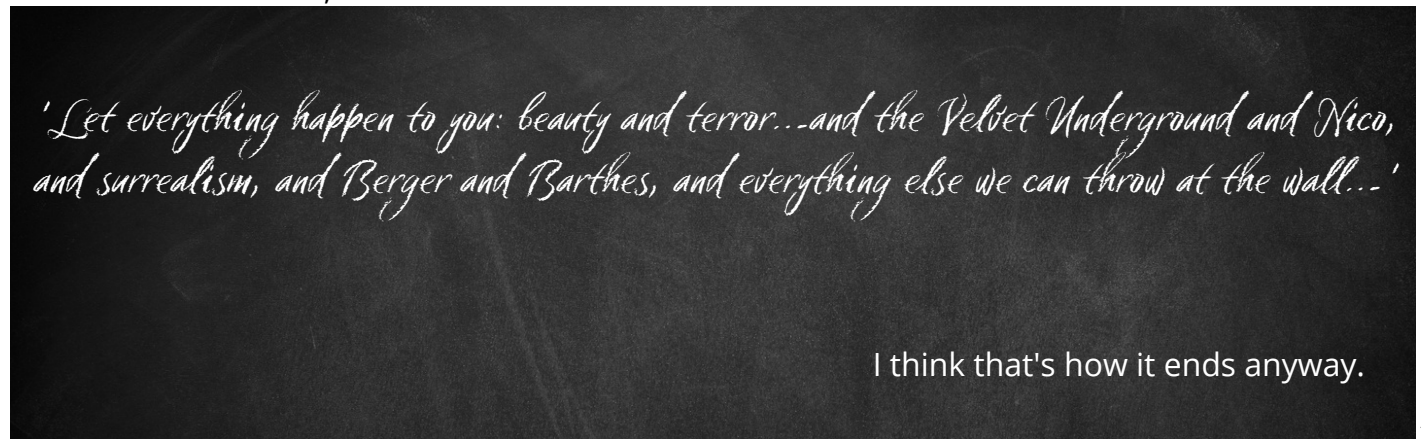
Acknowledging this, I've worked to reimagine my 1st Year classes. They're looser, less structured. Admittedly, this doesn't always land, there are times a digression leads further away than intended, but I think in doing so, students have the freedom to digress too. These classes focus on writing in all its forms, in nurturing a love of English at a personal level. Building moments for students which reach beyond the prescribed and into the intangible- a pause for breath and creativity. We study a novel, sure, but that only makes up a small part of the 'course' for the year. We also read strange short stories, recently by Leonora Carrington, Cathy Sweeney and George Saunders, and reflect on what they make us feel how they make us think differently. We write our own using what we've uncovered.

We explore art and write about it; we watch and make silly short films, we write our poetry and share it with each other. We create for ourselves, as often as we possibly can. I want voracious, insatiable appetites in my classroom. I want discussions about surrealism, modernism and form. At some stage in the year, 'that's great but could we dial down the weirdness half a notch? I want them to see what exists in the world and find refractions of themselves buried within this. If I'm searching for a way to describe what I'm trying to do it probably falls somewhere near intense curiosity- the desire to chase strange ideas into a corner and question them, and bring this understanding back into the rest of what we do in class.

I'm also acutely aware we do have a curriculum to follow and texts to study, so how can we do both? Can I be clever in teaching some of the more mundane aspects of English with exciting source material? I'm brought back to a seemingly throwaway lesson when I was in 5th year. Comprehension skills. Nothing massively exciting about it, but vital work to do. Yet, why has it lingered in my consciousness for so long? Because of the source material my teacher used. An article reviewing John Cale's Paris 1919 as a classic album, another on Phil Spector's Wall of Sound. What I remember were intoxicating conversations about The Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol, 15 mins of fame, and whether a reproduction of a tin of soup could be considered art, or who The Ronettes were, and whether Spector, as a thoroughly despicable man, could be simultaneously enjoyed as a musical genius. That's what I want - a connection between the structured curriculum and everything else outside it.

So, maybe that's our way into the more rigid demands of Senior Cycle, finding pockets and oases of air for additional material. While studying Dickinson this year, we took a quick diversion through Max Porter's Grief is a Thing with Feathers. It was interesting to show students that all literature is referential in some regard, and that there are inextricable links to be made between all texts - they all involve the human condition, they all shed some light on what it is to be alive and in this sense, speak to each of us. We need to continually fight, with our own judgement, to create more space for breath in the classroom, find interesting spots to come up for air and to be. Teach sentence structure using interesting sentences from literature - Brian Dillon's Suppose A Sentence does a lot of the leg work in the sourcing of this material. Teach short story writing using writers students would rarely get a chance to read, like Gogol and Chekhov, for which I have George Saunders to thank. The teaching of film can include the critical voices of Sontag, Berger and Barthes, even briefly, and this again is English teaching that excites me. Do they 'get' them? Not always, but a spark may go off, a switch flicked, a moment imprinted, that may lay dormant for a while and then come back on later in life, or it may not, but they had the experience nonetheless.

Like Rilke once wrote,



'Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror...and the Velvet Underground and Nico, and surrealism, and Berger and Barthes, and everything else we can throw at the wall...'

I think that's how it ends anyway.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE Teaching of English in Post-Primary Education

by Conor Murphy



A Review by Conor Murphy

@Conorsmurf

Ireland hasn't had too many books aimed at practising and novice second-level teachers of English, so the arrival of Kevin Cahill and Niamh Dennehy's book, *Perspectives on the Teaching of English in Post-Primary Education*, is a welcome addition to the pile, and hopefully, a sign that more books like these are on the way.

Before we go any further, I think it's important to note that I was asked to contribute a chapter, on Film, and so have some 'skin in the game', as the saying goes.

The book aims to provide 'useful strategies' for teachers and discuss 'rich theoretical underpinnings to the pedagogy of English.' Cahill and Dennehy say in their introduction that the intention 'is not to prescribe a pedagogical diet for English teachers but a tasting menu' that teachers can 'plunge into' when they need 'some inspiration and advice to inform their practice in the classroom.'

One of the joys of teaching in Ireland is how we embrace differences of opinion and approach, how, through dialogue, whether in an INOTE Conference, CPD, or this book, we are offered new ideas and philosophies. *Perspectives* is a great introduction to any number of new ideas.

I don't have the space to go through all sixteen chapters in the volume, so I'll pick out a few to try and demonstrate the range.

The opening chapter, by Hal O'Neill, is an overview of the ever-changing curriculum in Ireland. Considering where we are (about to go through more changes) it's worth a read to see how we have developed, and the thinking behind each development. With this knowledge, we can better look to the future, we can better contribute to the discussions around the development of the new Leaving Cert.

From this relatively wide-ranging history of English in Ireland, Kevin Cahill gets us right into school with a close study of how we might include everyone in our classrooms. Our classrooms were always diverse in learning abilities, but it's an ongoing concern for most. Cahill takes Seamus Heaney's 'When all the Others Were Away at Mass', a popular poem at Junior Cycle, and goes through a possible class with clarity of purpose and reasoning.

Cahill also has a fascinating and insightful chapter on Critical Literacy, an area of clear importance to us all.

Rachel Linehan's chapter, 'Other Voices: Speaking and Listening in the English Classroom' might be more apposite than we imagine, what with the changes coming down from above. With her extensive research informing her pedagogy, Linehan promotes a more 'dialogic classroom', rather than the overemphasis on 'teacher-talk'.

Linehan is not dismissing the teacher but asking us to consider the use of oracy in our pedagogy more deeply. She demonstrates the ease with which this can be fostered and promoted in the classroom by creating podcasts and using existing ones. As someone who has used and produced podcasts in the classroom, I can attest to her findings.

Using podcasts in class for various purposes leads me to Niamh Dennehy's chapter on 'Assessment in English'. Dennehy discusses the "'backwash" effect' of 'narrowing of teaching and learning' as a result of the 'dominance of the Leaving Certificate'. With this in mind, she sets out the many considerations we must consider when we form our own assessments to 'ensure students leave school as independent and self-directed learners with a strong sense of their own potential and a good foundation in a range of subjects.'

This chapter leads directly into Dennehy's equally thoughtful one on Feedback.

I have few words left, so let me read a few other chapters.

Notable amongst them is Claire Madden's, 'Visual Literacy in the English Classroom: What we can learn from cognitive psychology'. The chapter clearly articulates how we can use simple visual aids during note taking and planning.

With 'Digital Literacy and the English Classroom' Lorraine Kennan tackles an area some of us (well, me) are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with. But, don't worry, she's a very kind guide.

No book on the English classroom is allowed to go to print unless Selena Wilkes has written a chapter. Here, she talks about 'The Writing Journey'. As always with Wilkes, this is a thorough and clear approach to that most tricky of tasks; helping students to write and find their own voice within their writing.

As we are on writing, we should pause on the chapter by Caragh Bell, a renowned author, where she discusses how 'the best way for a teacher to "get inside writing" is for the teacher to be a writer themselves.' The act of writing in front of students, of sharing that writing, and rewriting, is a fruitful one for all involved. Bell goes through the process with the kind of warmth you would expect from such a respected teacher.

I have already gone over my word count, so must leave the other chapters by Dan O'Sullivan, Alicia Curtin, Brian Murphy, Marian McCarthy and Kate McCarthy, and Carmel Hinchion to you (yes, a lot left out of this review!). These range from Dyslexia, Development of Adolescent Literacy, Teaching Poetry, and Teaching Drama.

Hal O'Neill's chapter talks about the history of the study of English and the various traditions that have gone before. After reading the book I'm struck by how these traditions are being continued, challenged, and combined in interesting ways in our classrooms.

This alone bodes well for our students.





ChatGPT: Revolutionising English Teaching and Learning.

**When Elizabeth Barrett
Browning ran into a John
Deere**



**by Patrick Hickey
@lchistorytutor**

As an English and History teacher, I have always been interested in better teaching and learning. I believe AI, specifically ChatGPT, has the potential to enhance English education in several ways. It can save time, provide personalised learning experiences, and foster interactive teaching.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge certain limitations. These include the tool's restricted comprehension, varying reliability, and inaccuracies. We should utilise AI as a supplementary tool rather than a substitute for traditional teaching methods.

Furthermore, it is essential to teach our students—many of whom are already adopting this new technology—how to use it responsibly and critically.

Scenario:

It's May, and you're faced with the following challenge: you're teaching a class of students who are utterly fascinated by tractors, and you have one last poem left to cover - "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. You may be feeling worn out, and it's possible the students may feel the same about you. So, how do you engage them with this last piece of literature?

I want to showcase here a series of prompts that will help me teach this poem.

What are prompts?

In ChatGPT, prompts are like directions or guidelines that you provide to the AI model. They help it understand what you're looking for and generate a relevant response. Basic examples include:

1. "Can you explain the concept of symbolism in literature?"
2. "Tell me about the main themes in Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet."
3. "What are some effective strategies for improving writing skills?"

However, there's nothing here you wouldn't find out in a traditional search engine.

What makes ChatGPT different is that it is more of an action engine than a search engine. When you give it specific and detailed prompts like the ones I will demonstrate here, some of the results can be amazing.

32 So, let's get back to my class of "tractor heads". (Their term, not mine!)

Prompt 1:

You are an expert poetry teacher. Give me a range of ideas to introduce "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning to a class of teenage boys who have no interest in this type of poetry but are obsessed with tractors and agricultural work. List ideas in tabular form. The result:



Sure, here are some ideas presented in a tabular form for teaching the poem "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning to a class of tractor-obsessed teenage boys:



No	Activity	Description
1	<i>Tractor Metaphors</i>	Ask the students to rewrite the poem using metaphors that relate to tractors and farming. This exercise will not only make the poem relatable but also teach them about metaphoric expressions.
2	<i>Compare and Contrast</i>	Discuss how a tractor is reliable and important in their lives. Then, relate it to the constancy of love expressed in Browning's poem. Ask them to write a comparison essay.
3	<i>Illustrated Poem</i>	Allow students to illustrate the poem in the context of a tractor and farming life. Each line or stanza can have corresponding drawings.
4	<i>Music and Lyrics</i>	Challenge the class to turn the poem into a tractor-themed country song. This could be a fun group activity that combines their love for tractors and introduces them to the rhythm and structure of poetry.
5	<i>Debate</i>	Conduct a debate where half the class defends the importance of love as expressed in the poem, and the other half defends the importance of tractors in their lives. This allows students to explore the themes of the poem and understand how to articulate their own interests.
6	<i>Create a Poem</i>	Encourage the students to create their own poems, expressing their love for tractors, following the rhyme scheme and structure of Browning's poem. This helps them connect their interests with the poem's theme.
7	<i>Role-play</i>	Let the students perform a short skit based on the poem, but in the setting of a farm with tractors. It would be an engaging way to learn about character emotion and dialogue.
8	<i>Poem Analysis</i>	Discuss the lines of the poem in the context of tractor maintenance and farming. For example, the depth, breadth, and height the soul can reach might be related to the hard work, attention, and care that go into farming with tractors.

The results are mixed, but I am spoiled for choice. However, knowing my class as I do, there are certain suggestions they will embrace and others that simply won't take off. I like No. 5. It strikes me as an opportunity for a debate (and maybe a fun one), plus a great opportunity to hone their Paper 1 writing skills.

This brings us to Prompt 2:

Speaking for myself, I find it very hard to come up with good essay titles. So, I asked ChatGPT to give me 10 options on a debate about romantic love and tractors. As you'll find, Chat is a great springboard for this kind of thing. It gave me the following:

I prefer the first one.

Again, I am familiar with my students, and I am confident that the tractors will be more to their liking than romantic love at this point in their lives.

However, I want to set an example of what a debate looks like and sounds like before they create their own. I'm choosing to side with the sentiment that "Love is all".

This leads me to Prompt 3:

You are an English teacher. You are teaching a mixed-ability English class to 16 to 18-year-olds, who are inexperienced in terms of writing debates. Write a debate for the following motion "Love vs. Tractors: Which plays a more vital role in human happiness?" You will argue that romantic love is more important than tractors. Your debate should showcase the following techniques:

- Rhetorical questions
- A quote from "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
- Counter argument

The result:

After a class discussion and analysis of "my speech"; and by the way; do question and find fault with all of AI creations. We must encourage our students to critique what it produces. Chat GPT can do what I call the "7/10 job"; it's up to human critical thinking, creativity and imagination to finish the job.

Now that the class are primed to write their debate, let's get Chat GPT to create a feedback rubric to help them write their debate.

Certainly! Here are ten debate titles on the importance of love versus tractors:

1. "Love vs. Tractors: Which plays a more vital role in human happiness?"
2. "Love or Tractors: Which has a greater impact on personal fulfillment?"
3. "The Power of Love: Is it more significant than the role of tractors in society?"
4. "Tractors or Love: Which contributes more to the overall well-being of individuals?"
5. "Love vs. Tractors: Which is more essential for societal progress?"
6. "The Heart's Desire: Does love outweigh the importance of tractors in our lives?"
7. "Tractors or Love: Which has a stronger influence on the quality of human relationships?"
8. "Feeding the Soul or Feeding the World: The value of love versus tractors."
9. "Love vs. Tractors: Which holds the key to a more fulfilling and meaningful life?"
10. "Cultivating Hearts or Cultivating Fields: Examining the significance of love and tractors."

These debate titles provide an opportunity to explore the contrasting perspectives on the importance of love and tractors and engage in a lively discussion about their respective roles in our lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we are gathered here to debate a rather intriguing motion: "Love vs Tractors: Which plays a more vital role in human happiness?" Now, let us acknowledge the undeniable importance of tractors in our modern world. However, I stand before you to argue that true love holds a more profound power when it comes to bringing happiness to our lives.

First and foremost, let us consider the sheer power of three simple words: "I love you." These words can make our hearts soar to unimaginable heights, inspiring us to conquer challenges we never thought possible, and forging deep connections that bind us together. Can a tractor elicit such intense emotions, courage, or unity?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the renowned romantic poet, beautifully encapsulated this profound emotional bond in her sonnet, "How Do I Love Thee?" Browning ponders, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Does anyone sit down and pen sonnets about their tractors? Love, my dear listeners, has been the muse of poets, the inspiration for countless songs, and the heart of numerous tales since the dawn of civilization. It is woven into the very fabric of our human story, uniting us across cultures, languages, and time. Think of all the songs you listen to in the tractor cab. What are most of them about? Love!

Think about the heartbreak and financial hardship that tractors can bring about. They can break your heart, especially when they refuse to start on a chilly morning when you have a field to plough. What about the cost of a new tractor tyre? Add to that the soaring cost of diesel. Will your bank account ever recover from the trauma?

Tractors may be the vehicles of industry, but they are hardly the vehicles of happiness. Tractors plough fields and harvest silage, but can they embrace you and take away your worries? Can tractors hold your hand through a frightening movie, give you words of encouragement when you're depressed, or make you feel like the most important person in the world with a smile? Tractors are useful, but nothing beats the beauty and care of a true loved one.

In conclusion, tractors pale in comparison to the profound impact of love on human happiness. Love has the power to inspire, unite, and bring immense joy to our lives. It touches our hearts and souls in ways that tractors simply cannot. So, let us celebrate the enduring power of love, for it is through love that we truly find happiness and fulfilment in our lives.

Prompt 4:

Analyse this debate >> paste above debate here <<

In tabular form create a rubric for feedback in tabular form using suitable headings that test a student’s ability to write an effective debate in this fashion.

The result may not be perfect, but you can edit and change as you see fit.

Criteria	Poor (1)	Below Average (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Clarity of Argument	Argument is incoherent, no clear stance.	Argument is unclear, stance not apparent.	Argument somewhat clear with some gaps, stance unclear at times.	Argument clear with minor inconsistencies, stance apparent.	Argument is clear and logical, stance obvious and persuasive.
Use of Evidence	No evidence or inappropriate evidence used.	Insufficient or loosely related evidence provided.	Adequate evidence provided, though not fully persuasive or related.	Good use of evidence, mostly persuasive and related.	Excellent use of compelling, persuasive, and related evidence.
Organization of Ideas	Ideas lack structure, seem disjointed.	Some structure apparent, ideas loosely connected.	Ideas generally organized, some loose connections.	Ideas well-organized and clearly connected.	Ideas exceptionally well-organized, clear and logical connections.
Refutation of Opposing Viewpoints	Does not address opposing viewpoints.	Briefly mentions opposing viewpoints.	Addresses opposing viewpoints, but not convincingly.	Refutes opposing viewpoints effectively.	Refutes opposing viewpoints thoroughly and convincingly.
Use of Rhetorical Techniques	No rhetorical techniques used.	Few rhetorical techniques used ineffectively.	Some rhetorical techniques used, not always effectively.	Good use of rhetorical techniques, mostly effective.	Excellent use of diverse rhetorical techniques, highly effective.
Style and Language	Language inappropriate or hard to understand.	Language is basic, lacks sophistication.	Language is clear, but lacks variety or sophistication.	Language is varied, sophisticated, and generally appropriate.	Language is sophisticated, varied, and consistently appropriate.
Engagement with the Audience	Fails to engage audience, lacks energy.	Minimal audience engagement, low energy.	Fair audience engagement, inconsistent energy level.	Good audience engagement, maintains energy throughout.	Excellent audience engagement, consistently high energy and interaction.

Prompt 5:

Lest we forget, there is a very tricky poem to be broken down here.
In tabular form, write >>insert text of poem here << in 21st-century English and in language a 12-year-old can understand. The result is a great example of differentiation:

	19th Century English	21st Century English	Explained for a 12-year-old
	How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight For the ends of being and ideal grace. I love thee to the level of every day's Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light. I love thee freely, as men strive for right. I love thee purely, as they turn from praise. I love thee with the passion put to use In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith. I love thee with a love I seemed to lose With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath, Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death.	How do I love you? Let me list the ways. I love you as deeply, widely, and highly as my soul can reach, even when it's beyond my perception, touching the essence of existence and perfect beauty. I love you as much as my everyday, most basic needs, whether it's day or night. I love you without restraint, as people strive for justice. I love you purely, like those who reject insincere flattery. I love you with the passion I once put into my past sorrows, and with the trust I had as a child. I love you with the same love that I thought I lost when I lost my revered ones. I love you with every breath, smile, and tear of my entire life. And, if God allows, I'll love you even more after death.	How much do I love you? Let me count the ways. I love you as much as possible, as far as my feelings can go, even to the most beautiful and good things I can't see. I love you as much as I need everyday things, like food and water, during the day and at night. I love you freely, like people fight for what's right. I love you truly, like people who don't like fake compliments. I love you with the strong feelings I had when I was sad before, and with the trust I had when I was a kid. I love you with the same love that I thought I lost when someone I really cared about left or passed away. I love you with every breath I take, every smile and tear in my life. And, if God lets it happen, I'll love you even more when I'm no longer alive.

Prompt 6:

For each of the following headings, create a set of notes for Sonnets from the Portuguese 43: How do I love thee? Let me count the ways: Title, Tone, Themes, Main Techniques, and Relevance for today's reader. These notes must be in tabular format.

The result:

Heading	Notes
Title	"Sonnet 43" from "Sonnets from the Portuguese" - The title is simple, following the numbering convention of sonnets. The reference to Portuguese is not about the language, but a pet name Robert Browning (Elizabeth Barrett Browning's husband) had for her.
Tone	The tone is passionately intense, sincere, and deeply affectionate. Browning shares a profound love that transcends the physical world.
Themes	Love (especially, the spiritual and transcendental nature of love), the soul's reach beyond the physical world, the constancy and depth of human emotion, faith, and mortality.
Main Techniques	Browning uses various poetic techniques: iambic pentameter (a rhythm structure common in sonnets), repetition of the phrase "I love thee" to emphasize the depth of her feelings, metaphors to describe the scope and nature of her love, and biblical allusions, among others.
Relevance for the reader of today	The poem continues to be relevant today as it discusses timeless themes like love and faith that resonate universally. It portrays a deep, enduring love that is not just physical but emotional and spiritual as well. This depth and constancy of love can be appealing and comforting to contemporary readers. It also offers a chance to appreciate the beauty of classic poetic form and language.

Prompt 7:

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, create several assessment techniques you can use to evaluate students' understanding of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways"

As we've seen, AI, especially ChatGPT, has the potential to revolutionise English education. It saves so much time, offers personalised learning, and promotes interactive teaching.

However, it's crucial to recognise its limitations and use it as a supplement, not a replacement. Combining AI assistance with our guidance engages students, caters to their interests, and deepens their understanding.

But remember, don't be in awe of it in front of students. Question, probe, and undermine its responses all the time. By instilling a healthy scepticism towards AI, we empower students to become active participants in their own learning process and to harness the full potential of AI as a learning tool and not just a "get out of (homework) jail card".

Sure! Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, here are several assessment techniques you can use to evaluate students' understanding of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways":
1. Remembering:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple-choice questions: Ask students to identify the correct word or phrase to complete a given line from the poem.• Fill in the blanks: Provide students with a set of incomplete lines and ask them to fill in the missing words.• Quizzes: Create short quizzes that test students' recall of specific lines or themes from the poem.
2. Understanding:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarization: Ask students to write a brief summary of the poem, highlighting its main ideas and themes.• Explain in your own words: Request students to explain the meaning of specific lines or stanzas from the poem using their own words.• Compare and contrast: Prompt students to compare and contrast this poem with another work by Elizabeth Barrett Browning or a different poet.
3. Applying:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rewrite a stanza: Ask students to rewrite one of the stanzas from the poem in their own style, maintaining the original meaning.• Create a visual representation: Have students create a visual representation, such as a painting or a collage, that captures the essence of the poem.
4. Analyzing:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literary devices: Ask students to identify and analyze the different literary devices used in the poem (e.g., metaphors, similes, alliteration, personification).• Interpretation: Encourage students to provide their interpretation of specific lines or stanzas and support their analysis with evidence from the text.
5. Evaluating:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal response: Ask students to write a personal reflection on the poem, expressing their thoughts and feelings about the themes and emotions conveyed.• Peer review: Have students exchange their written analyses of the poem and provide constructive feedback to their peers.
6. Creating:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a poem: Challenge students to write their own love poem, inspired by the structure or themes of "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways."• Performance: Allow students to perform a dramatic reading or recitation of the poem, adding their own creative elements to enhance the performance.

A Breath of Fresh Air: Bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [DE&I] into TY English



by Elaine Campbell
@Elainey_eire1

We're firmly settling into the twenty-twenties decade, with social evolution marking a clear shift from the pre-pandemic world. As digital natives, our emerged Generation Z learners have a keener awareness of their rights & responsibilities and are propelling the culturally diverse communities we live in. Our TY English classroom can provide a rich learning space to nurture diversity, equity, and inclusion through our dynamic choice of texts and pedagogy once we pause, reflect, and collaboratively reimagine our TY Scheme of Work.

Our incoming TY English class group is a kaleidoscopic vault of untapped potential spilling forth lively ideas, fiery creativity, powerful thoughts & opinions, and raw talent, which we can enjoy mentoring as leaders in learning. Here are some SOW ideas to breathe new life into your TY English programme.

Songs and Poetry:

Song lyrics are an invaluable segue to energise TY learners after Junior Cycle English poetry. You could use a block of T&L or intersperse a term with lessons that explore some classic & contemporary songs with universally applicable themes representing our current era. Gen Z learners could double up and study the song lyrics and/or music videos as visual texts. We like using Childish Gambino's This is America alongside Billie Holiday's Strange Fruit as social history to highlight equity issues in our world today. Learners can dig in to compare & contrast similar themes, subject matter, and poetic techniques. Other firm favourites include Hozier's Take Me to Church, to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and The Cranberries' Zombie, to touch on the theme of conflict, alongside We Lived Happily during the War by poet Ilya Kaminsky or Eavan Boland's The War Horse and consider voices of war and displaced peoples.

October:

**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**

Ireland is only one of five countries that features Black History Month alongside the UK and the Netherlands in October, with Canada and the USA promoting BHM in February. You could facilitate your TY English group and grant them the leadership space to lead a whole school DE&I project and create a mini BHM lesson/podcast for tutor time, information boards, internal digital screen displays, and content for the school website & social media platforms. In my school, we work alongside the Student Council and Yellow Flag Programme to create a whole school media campaign. TY English classes study *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas as a semi-self-directed learning task. We read some of the text during class time with Audible and have class discussions based on the social themes contained in the text. We also explore text extracts from *Letters Home* (Caribbean Modern Classics) by Paulette Ramsey and research landing cards from the Windrush Generation archives online. Our English team also uses excerpts from Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* to examine ideas of self-identification and first-generation ethnic heritage. Building on this rich reading experience, students use learner's choice to create content mixing print and digital formats that promote diversity, such as BIPOC writer/film recommendations, appropriate language terms regarding ethnicity, etc. There are many short clips and articles on the RTÉ website and player we use to engage TY learners and model podcast format alongside article writing as online media content.

My classroom walls strategically feature book covers and film posters that span a broad range of national and international texts. I use an A3 PowerPoint slide to print off novel covers and film posters that feature a wide range of cultural heritages and ethnicities and revitalise my walls annually. Copy and paste into an A3 slide and print off A3 size in colour!

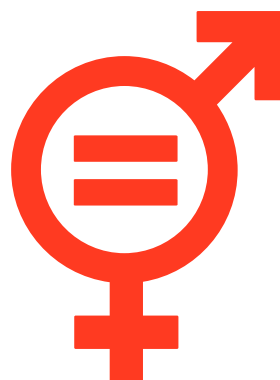
To model and nurture DE&I, I use my TY Film Studies as a jumping-off point to explore visual texts from around the globe. This year, I used *The Perfect Candidate* [2019] by Wadjda director Haifaa al-Mansour to explore life in Saudi Arabia. We looked at the film through the comparative study of cultural context mode through the lens of gender roles via male and female experiences.



After this building block, we delved into *Pride* [2014], directed by Matthew Warchus. This social history text revisits the 1984 UK Miner's Strike and the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners Campaign. Based on a true story, *Pride* powerfully instils the importance of using your voice and social justice to promote DE&I. This text also compliments *The Perfect Candidate*, featuring marginalised groups striving for equity and inclusion.

Transition Year English is an ideal exploratory space to keep topics fresh and enhance awareness of DE&I amongst our young people. As leaders of learning, our TY English programme can evolve to meet the needs of our growing, diverse school communities. Our TY English class is an enjoyable unprescribed learning space where we can pause, breathe, and gently nurture our young people's support for all varieties of people in our learning community and beyond.

Create a **POSITIVE**
and **INCLUSIVE**
learning
ENVIRONMENT



Question B: Functional Writing



by Deirdre Carroll

"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed". And as I leave this promised piece to the eleventh hour, I feel a smidgen of Hemingway's pain, but not the slightest bit of his talent. However, self-pity side, I (unlike many of our Leaving Cert students) have chosen to compose this piece on an area of the course I particularly enjoy teaching; the functional writing task that appears on the Leaving Certificate Paper One, in the guise of QB. The QB task is surely the most pragmatic element of the current Leaving Cert course. Despite this fact, it is the poorest-performing element in the state exam.

As English teachers pushing Plath, Petrarch, and the appeal of Polonius, often meet with strong resistance. The cry, "What's the point in this?", "When will we ever need this again?", "Why, why, why?" We have all been faced with the difficulties of whetting the 21st-century teenage literary appetite. However, the functional writing task is a skill for life. Articles, letters, speeches, and their variations will all be called for again and again, in both immediate college life and on that bigger stage – real life!

For me, this area of the course is the most enjoyable, both for the busman's holiday of perusing the weekend papers (very old school, I know) and for the immense pleasure I derive from reading student responses. As a self-confessed magpie, I constantly collect articles, advice, and any other gems I encounter. The gem I consider central to this task was shared with me by a very talented teacher, Tommy, whom I encountered many years ago on the highly innovative Instructional Intelligence Leadership Course. At the time, I found this course transformational to my teaching, but that was only half of it! The mingling with enthusiastic, generous teachers who oozed being on top of their game was probably the richer reward. But I digress. It was Tommy who first shared with me the now well-worn acronym, 'I fancy Clare Rooney'. The IFCR dictates the structure of any well-composed piece.

I
for Introduction

F
for facts, i.e., the
body of
information

C
for Conclusion

R
for
Recommendation

The initial foray into conveying this to students involves reading good-quality articles or speeches. Examples abound in textbooks and previous papers, but my preference is to bring current writing into the classroom. Matt Rudd is a current favorite. Brenda Power, Brendan O'Conner, and Jeremy Clarkson (love him or loathe him, he writes really well) all make regular appearances in my classroom. Jeremy Clarkson's satirical suggestions for confronting the planetary emergency of population explosion were very popular. It allowed me to introduce Swift's Modest Proposal and spawned some highly entertaining satirical suggestions for solving a vast range of dilemmas.

All that fun aside, the acronym lends itself snugly to the current question structure. Let's take the 2022 task from text one;

Some students believe that the study of poetry should be an optional rather than a compulsory element of the Leaving Certificate English course. Write an open letter to be published on a popular social media platform to encourage discussion on this topic.

In your open letter, you should:

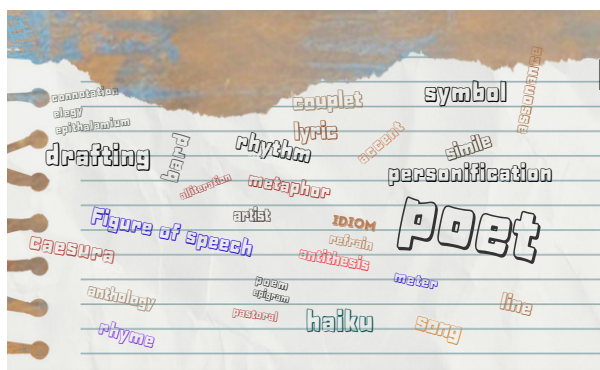
- 1. explain what, if any, value you found in the study of poetry as part of your Leaving Certificate English course,**
- 2. explore the reasons why you think the study of poetry should be an optional or a compulsory element of Leaving Certificate English in the future, and**
- 3. seek to anticipate and refute views that might potentially be offered in opposition to your chosen stance.**

The SEC make the task clear to the candidate printing it in bold. The functional writing task should clearly mirror that task; i.e., a letter should have a letter layout, a semblance of an address, a date, a greeting, and a sign-off at the end. An article must have a headline, a clever alliterative/ pun will already be gathering marks. Think Qatar's refusal to allow Harry Kane to wear a rainbow armband during the recent World Cup, which was cleverly captured in the headline 'Pride and Prejudice.' Likewise, speeches must have all the bells and whistles associated with speech writing.

The Introduction should acknowledge the audience and address the overall topic to be discussed. In this sample, I have added the underline. This is the audience, and this influences the register the writer must adopt, i.e. the suitable tone. These numbers inserted by me are all placed beside a verb, the action word which dictates the content of the next three paragraphs. These are the Facts.

Lastly, the Conclusion the writer should aim to pull their piece together, generally by coming full circle, back to the introduction.

From their exposure to the established writers, they will see that they always sign off with some nod to the future, a Recommendation of sorts. This line or so aims to leave the reader with something to remember. Hopefully, I have too!



Poetry at Junior Cycle as a pathway to Leaving Certificate Prescribed and Unseen Poetry

by Sonya Mongey

Rationale:

The bridge between the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate English courses is, in general, far widening and challenging, particularly for students. For example, students are expected to engage briefly with both studied and unseen poetry at Junior Cycle, while at Leaving Certificate the expectations are much broader in terms of comprehension, analysis and discussion. For this reason, encouraging students to begin embarking on a broader study of poetry at an earlier stage in their education is advantageous. Of course, by 3rd Year, the skills required for a deeper analysis of poetry are not yet fully developed, but as a result of introducing students to these skills, the task of studying poetry at Leaving Certificate is less daunting for students.

Getting things in order:

Students create a 'Poetry' section in their English folder. This section is subdivided into the following sections:

- *Poetic Techniques*
- *Poetic Terminology*
- *One dedicated sub-section per studied poem*

Each time a new technique or term is understood, students transfer their knowledge of this information, always in their own words to aid comprehension, into the relevant sub-section of their 'Poetry' section. The addition of techniques is always accompanied by the effect the technique generally has on a poem. As such, students are consistently building on their knowledge of techniques and poetry-specific terminology.

The Checklist:

This is the most essential tool that allows for a broader introduction to the skills required for studying poetry at Leaving Certificate. The checklist is comprised of four different parts. For each poem that is studied, students must provide an overview of the following: what the poem deals with, how the poem possibly links with other poems on their course, a selection of poetic techniques present within the poem (I usually suggest 2-3), and the effect these techniques have on the poem and finally, how the student personally engaged with the poem. At first glance, this may seem complicated, but it doesn't need to be. A typical checklist will look as below before the student has filled it in. The student titles their page with the name of the studied poem and writes down the following, leaving adequate spacing between each part of the checklist.

- *Deals with:*
- *Link:*
- *Techniques and effects:*
- *Personal engagement:*

Deals with:

For this part of their checklist, students are encouraged to provide an overview of what the poem deals with. This requires more than just identifying a theme or issue. Students are required to discuss the poem's subject matter as they understand it. The skill developed here compels students to look at a poem in more depth.

Link:

Here, students are encouraged to find links with other poems from their course. I always emphasise that a link can display a similarity or difference between poems. Here, students have the opportunity to develop skills of comparison.

Techniques and effect:

Using the 'Poetic Technique' section of their folder, students are asked to identify two to three poetic techniques used by the poet. Furthermore, students are compelled to display an understanding of the effect these techniques have on the poem.

Personal engagement:

This can often present as the trickiest section of the checklist as students are implored to express the poem's impact on them. I always tell students to be as honest as possible here. I always start by asking them to think about whether they liked or disliked the poem in question. The vital part of this section lies in their explanation. They must always explain 'the why'. They may have disliked a poem because they found the subject matter unappealing or indeed unrelatable, or they may have liked a poem due to its links with other poems on their course. Essentially, the main requirement for this section is a valid explanation. Additionally, this section always allows them to ultimately pull from other sections of their checklist, thus rounding off a more in-depth look at the poem under analysis.

In Action:

We would generally spend three 1-hour class periods studying a specific poem.

Lesson 1:

The title of the poem is written on the board. Having divided students into groups, they are encouraged to work collaboratively in order to predict what they believe the poem will be about. A class discussion will then take place. I would usually assign 8-10 minutes for this activity.

Next, a selection of carefully selected pre-reading questions is provided. These are questions specific to the poem. Of course, at this stage, we haven't even read the poem yet. However, the aim of providing pre-reading questions is to elicit the students' abilities to use questions as an aid source, and to evoke interest in the subject matter. Again, students work collaboratively here. There is no requirement to write their answers on paper as this adds undue pressure at a time when we are trying to encourage an interest in poetry. Like the previous activity, this one will also be followed by a class discussion. This activity requires more time, usually 15-18 minutes in total.

Subsequently, information is provided about the poet. I generally provide a PowerPoint presentation along with visuals and, where possible, video clips including the poet in question. This allows students to not only gain a sense of the writer but also allows them to add to their pre-gained knowledge of the poem. This part of the lesson, including student participation, takes roughly 12-15 minutes.

In the final part of the lesson, the poem is read. I usually read it twice and then get students to read it themselves.

The homework assigned will always be to write a 'First Response' to the poem. This must briefly include their initial understanding of the poem, any techniques that they notice or any questions they have about the poem.

Lesson two:

We begin by recapping the information about the poem and poet from the previous lesson. I usually allow 5-7 minutes for this discussion.

Next, I ask students to swap their 'First Response' activities with each other. Students read these quietly before offering information to the class on request. This allows for students' work to be read somewhat anonymously and for students to feel comfortable discussing the poem in a class setting as they are essentially offering up the words of their peers, and not their own. We usually spend 10-15 minutes on the activity.

The remainder of the lesson is spent reading the poem (usually three times, of which one should include, where possible, an online reading of the poem accompanied by a video or animation). Each reading is interjected, often on my own accord, although student interjection is encouraged, to highlight and discuss important parts of the poem, including the use of poetic techniques by the poet and the impact they have on the poem. This allows for the students' comprehension of the poem to broaden.

Homework for this lesson will usually incorporate questions requiring a detailed response, including a point, relevant evidence and a conjoining explanation.

Lesson three:

As with the previous lesson, we begin by rehashing the content of the preceding class. This takes 5-7 minutes.

Next, we look at homework. I divide students into groups and allow for collaborative discussion regarding their answers. At this stage in our study of the poem, students are generally more confident discussing their opinions and responses with the class.

The remainder of the lesson is dedicated to 'The Checklist'. Students can opt to work individually or collaboratively here. The content of the previous two lessons allows for adequate completion of their checklists, which is required for completion for the following class.

NOTE-TAKING AND REVISION

by Denise Coleman

One innovation that has really helped my students this year is providing them with note-taking grids. For poetry, I have a grid with seven headings- Poem/Poet, Subject, Theme, Imagery, Language Choice, Tone, Techniques and Sound Effects (STILTTS). I then provide suggested adjectives for each heading i.e., Imagery-Vivid, Visual, Evocative, Aural, etc. They can then insert the points and quotes under each heading. I put the main points of our class discussion on the board, and they decide what they want to put into their grid. This means that critical thinking is involved, and it is an active decision rather than passive copying from the board.

They must decide which information is most meaningful to them and where it belongs on the grid. This active engagement increases the likelihood that this information will be remembered. I also get them to steal points from each other so that each box is filled, creating another opportunity for discussion and collaboration. Using grids also helps with classroom questioning because instead of saying 'What did you think?' I can say, 'Tell me something you wrote in your grid?' This is a more concrete instruction and is an open question without being too open. This makes it less intimidating for less articulate students. It also enables points to re-emerge in the class discussion which is essential as students need to hear something between three and six times to make it their own. You can then 'bounce' the comment to someone else in the class and ask them if would they add anything which promotes dialogue between the students.

The significant advantage of the grid is that they now have an organised set of notes which they compiled themselves.

This strategy is beneficial for SEN students who need help taking and organising notes. When I did the Dyslexia Study Skills Course, the presenter pointed out that dyslexic students must take in information in an organised way to ensure that their output of the information is equally organised. It also helps students select what they need to remember for the exam as the headings remind them of the priority information when revising they can zoom in immediately on the information that they need.

The fact that headings are provided scaffolds the task of taking notes which is an advanced and challenging skill for many students and reduces the word count that is required to make your notes useful. The act of writing makes it far more likely that information will be transferred to their long-term memory. You can also ask them to turn the grid into a mind-map, which would further reinforce the learning.

As a revision exercise, I give them the same grid with the same headings and see what they can fill out from memory, which is a form of retrieval practice. In some of my grids, I provide a heading for a picture, allowing them to represent their ideas visually. This can be very helpful for some learners and creates an additional memory cue which helps with information recall.

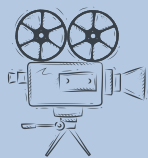
44 Students can also be invited to look at their grid and upgrade some of their word choices.

Poem and Poet	Style	Theme	Imagery Vivid, Evocative, Metaphors, Similes, Symbol, Aural Images, Visual Images	Language Choice- Emotive, Connotations Accessible, Simple, Colloquial	Tone	Poetic Techniques Repetition, Contrast, Exaggeration, Rhetorical Questions	Sound Effects Alliteration, Rhyme, Rhythm, Pace, Run-on Lines, Assonance, Onomatopaeia

	Ladybird by Greta Gerwig	Philadelphia Here I Come by Brian Friel	Kindertransport by Diane Samuels
What is the role of men (the expectations placed on men by the culture? What is the role of women? How does this affect the characters? Put Key Moment in Red			
Is there a hierarchy? Or does everyone have equal status? What gives you status/respect? Is it money? Put Key Moment in Red.			
How are family relationships and communication influenced by the culture that they live in? Put Key Moment in Red.			
How much freedom is there in this culture to express your true identity? Can you make choices that reflect your deepest desires? Put Key Moment in Red.			

Shakespeare					
Jealousy	Racism	Reason/Emotions- /Decision-Making	Appearance/Reality	Judgement/Discern ment	

Reflecting on Leaving Certificate Applied: English and Communications



by Mikey Meally



The Leaving Certificate Applied [LCA] English & Communications course had remained immutable since 1995. The old course emphasised the vocational aspects of LCA with both elements of English and Communication sharing equal billing, hence the emphasis on different processes of personal communication, communication systems and skills for the workplace and business management. I just couldn't make meeting minutes and memos memorable, no matter how much alliteration I used. Consequently, I always dreaded Modules 1 and 2 but perked up like the puppy in those Andrex ads for Modules 3 and 4. I started teaching the course in 2017, and it was immediately apparent that it badly needed reform simply because it was so outdated. The media section did not reflect remotely the concepts of view on demand, streaming services, or social media platforms. Students increasingly saw a historic world receding swiftly into the mists of time. It was time for a change.

The new course is quite different in its vision: the emphasis has really shifted towards the English province of the kingdom with more emphasis on textual awareness, purpose and interpretation. Rather than explicit vocational skills, skills are developed through textual study. Cleverly, several large foundational chunks of the old course remain, so teaching the course allows both past comforts and future excitements to coexist. Studying poetry, song, drama, film, and prose remains, but a new emphasis on digital communication has updated the course. The new course is quite streamlined and cohesive regarding its desired learning outcomes; they are both clear and achievable.

Furthermore, the prioritisation of skills over texts has thankfully not been copied from Junior Cycle. Studying texts in detail and radiating outwards from them to consider wider textual concerns still remains the bedrock of what happens in the subject. A significant theme of student reflection is promoted in all four modules. Students are expected to keep a reflection journal that encourages them to consider their own progress as a learner, which very much promotes growth in mindset attitudes toward learning.

Studying a novel and using it as a springboard to consider issues of identity and relationships, as well as narrative journeys as a way of understanding life journeys, animates Module 1: Personal and Social Communication. What I think is really encouraging is that the vision for the new course is to promote LCA as an equal sibling of the more standard LCE rather than some outcast cousin—the various training days I attended stressed the need to aim for the intellectual complexity of LCE by using texts that have appeared on the LCE English texts lists or suitable equivalents. Gone, hopefully, are the days of passing off John Boyne's 'The Dare' as suitable for 16 to 18-year-old students. The obvious caveat to this is that you must cater for the class sitting in front of you. There's not much point trying to pitch 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' to my class of country girls. However, reading some of the chapters of local author Donal Ryan's 'The Spinning Heart' worked wonders because the girls recognised these characters from their own lives, as well as knowing their lingo and understanding some of their problems.

While they were intrigued by Colin Barrett's short story, 'Let's Go Kill Ourselves', it was Claire Keegan's 'Foster' that quietly burrowed its way deepest into their imaginations. We also studied R.J. Palacio's graphic novel, 'White Bird', which led to a massive key assignment designing book covers for a novel, short story and graphic novel. Thankfully, Module 2's explorations of digital communication (which I was dreading but actually enjoyed) gives LCA students an advantage over their LCE counterparts. It feeds directly into their lived experience of the digital world and is exclusive to LCA English and Communications, rendering it fresh and relevant. We certainly had a lot of fun classes desperately trying to evade targeted advertising in our privacy settings - it turns out it's nigh on impossible!

There is perhaps a downside to the new course: it can be a little overambitious in scope and forget the slower pace essential for LCA students. However, This slower pace allows the course its unique breathing space, where conversations can roam where they need to, to allow students the necessary headspace to understand topics and ask questions they sometimes feel they could not ask previously. In my school setting, this perception of slowness is often used to stigmatise LCA as a potential avenue of study for students, with parents being particularly reluctant to embrace it. This sometimes leads to students consistently struggling for two years in LCE when they could be succeeding daily in LCA. The psychological impact of these two alternatives and their consequent impact on student well-being is obvious. In my school, only a small number of students opt for the LCA journey, which often leads to a type of ghettoisation where LCA students view themselves not as 5th or 6th Years but as LCAs, separate entities completely, that exist on the margins of the school community. Our job is to promote the subject as best we can, celebrating its opportunities and strengths where possible.

Like the previous course, Modules 3 and 4 certainly present myriad opportunities for student creativity. Module 3: Communication in Media and Module 4: Express Yourself are very familiar indeed with elements of media analysis, film studies, and advertising, followed quickly by considerations of song, poetry and drama. These are essentially most of the English part of the old course repackaged slightly. The new expansiveness of Module 3 allows consideration of digital media, instantly making it modern and relevant but also allowing a contrast with more traditional media. My classes have examined the 'explosive' revelations of the Harry and Meghan fiasco but, more recently, the Luis Rubiales scandal, which was fascinating, especially one student's preference for The Sun's very balanced investigation of Rubiales' "sleaze lair!" One of the new aspects of the course is its insistence on a chronological sequencing of modules, which is simply impossible in my school due to low numbers, where a film studied in Module 3 needs comparison with a novel studied in Module 1. However, careful study of the Key Assignment wording reveals that students need only compare a film with a "related text." The deliberately vague wording allows a world of wriggle room to suit a class' needs: vagueness becomes a useful tool for once. I made a complete mess of this first time around, but now I'm much more confident that pairing John Crowley's 'Brooklyn' with a love poem or a report on the plight of Irish emigrants in Britain or comparing the ending of the film with that of John Carney's film 'Once' will be much more fruitful.

The new course is not perfect, but it is potentially great and deserves to be championed. It sometimes overestimates the abilities of the average LCA student, but by raising the bar higher and prioritising the power of stories, whether through traditional media or digital media, it allows most students to find something relatable, memorable or even enjoyable and certainly something a lot more meaningful than compiling meeting minutes for mini-companies.

Held to Ransom by the Leaving Certificate

by Patricia Treacy
@trish00276257

My advice to exam students was always to find time to breathe during exams to come up for air every now and again. I've been teaching for 27 years. I've put thousands of students through the LC. It should be "water off a duck's back" when one of my own children sits it. Oh, how wrong I was about this simple formula.

People also comment about how lucky he is that I'm a teacher. Is he lucky? I no longer see it that way. Personally, I think it's worse. As I know exactly what is in front of him, and he wants me nowhere near him!

When the Leaving Cert enters your house, it is a very unwelcome guest. In fact, the word "guest" is possibly too kind; it is more like an intruder as it holds the house captive, and there is no escape. It is torturous. I have relived my own LC by watching my eighteen-year-old son count down the days, walking listlessly around the house, knowing he should be studying but unable to summon the energy or control to sit in front of those notes any longer. Instead, a hurl is grabbed and sliotars hit the wall of the house. With each bang, I can sense his frustration pound into my soul. Next up, it's a golf club. It's certainly less taxing on the house and he seems calmer putting balls around the garden from different angles. Watching him through the kitchen window, I can see that he is on the cusp of freedom. The entire family can smell it on the horizon, and we anticipate it with open arms.

This isn't our first familial Leaving Cert journey. My daughter was part of the LC class of 2020. She escaped the exam, and, by default, the house escaped too. Consequently, this is the first year that the Leaving Cert has really rattled this house and, by God, it really has us by the throat. It holds the house to ransom. No one escapes. No one. Everyone is walking on eggshells. Words are chosen carefully as a volcanic eruption can occur at the slightest verbal misadventure.

With all the talk of reforming the Leaving Cert, would I change its format now? After living through it from this perspective?

No. I definitely wouldn't. There was also pain and drama with each portfolio and brief submitted this year.

Making it more practical has its own pressures attached. I speak now as the mother of a Leaving Cert student, having doffed my teacher's hat completely, that the Leaving Cert is a rite of passage for everyone in the household. It teaches resilience, strength, and the importance of work ethic. It reminds us all of the beauty of freedom.

The Leaving Cert holds a house to ransom but when the bond is finally paid, the liberty experienced is sweet, cherished and enjoyed. We'll float to the surface and breathe in the fresh air of FREEDOM!

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