

MACQUARIE PEN ANTHOLOGY *of* AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

TEACHING GUIDE

Unit 9: Voices

for Upper Secondary English

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Voices

FOCUS	How writers create distinctive voices in fiction and non fiction texts.
LEVEL	Upper Secondary
LENGTH	Approximately 12 – 14 lessons
KEY TEXTS	<p>From the <i>Anthology</i>:</p> <p>Arthur, ‘King George’: Letter to Colonial Secretary, Van Diemen’s Land Clift, Charmian: ‘Images in Aspic’ Dawe, Bruce: ‘A Victorian Hangman Tells his Love’ Grenville, Kate: ‘How Many Birthdays Left?’ Horne, Donald: <i>The Education of Young Donald</i> Humphries, Barry: ‘Letter to Richard Allen’ Keating, Paul: ‘The Ghost of the Swagman’ Kelly, Ned: ‘The Jerilderie Letter’ Leunig, Michael: ‘One of the Preambles’ Menzies, Robert: ‘The Forgotten People’ Morgan, Anna: ‘Under the Black Flag’</p> <p>Supplementary texts:</p> <p>Rudd, Kevin ‘The Sorry Speech’: www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm</p>
ADDITIONAL TEXTS	<p>Additional examples of texts from the <i>Anthology</i> that teachers could use for this unit include:</p> <p>Anderson, Jessica: <i>Tirra Lirra by the River</i> Barnard, Marjorie: ‘Australian Literature’ Franklin, Miles: <i>My Brilliant Career</i> Gordon, Adam Lindsay: ‘The Sick Stockrider’ Hughes, Robert: <i>The Culture of Complaint</i> Palmer, Nettie: <i>Fourteen Years</i> Philips, A.A.: ‘Cultural cringe’, <i>Meanjin</i> 9.4 (1950) Stephens, A.G.: ‘A Poet’s Mother’</p>

<p>LEARNING & TEACHING ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Introduction</p>	<p>When you hear someone you know speak on the telephone you understand who it is from their voice. Similarly, writers have distinctive textual voices that can be recognised by their readers.</p> <p>A writer’s voice distinguishes him or her from other writers. The indicators of voice include the tone, the choice of vocabulary, the rhythms, the patterning, and the relationship established between the writer and the intended audience.</p> <p>Sometimes in a complex text there are several voices or points of view that can be heard. The use of different voices in a text affects the way in which meaning is conveyed.</p> <p>In this unit students will be introduced to a panorama of Australian authorial voices and encouraged to learn about how voice is constructed in fiction and non fiction.</p>
<p>1. Elements of voice</p> <p>(1 lesson)</p>	<p>Activity 1(a) Begin by asking questions of students that draw out what they know about voice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of when you hear the word ‘voice’? • What is meant by a writer’s voice? • What is meant by a character’s voice? • Is voice the same as point of view? <p>Activity 1(b) Ask students to list two or three texts they have studied previously and/or which have made a strong impression on them. Ask them to record beside the titles anything they can tell you about the writer’s voice in those texts. Compare answers as a class. What elements recur in your discussion of voice (tone, point of view, choice of language and image, etc.)?</p> <p>Activity 1(c) Try some brainstorming activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List resources authors draw on to create their voice • List words that can be used to describe the attitude a writer takes towards their subject (eg: the tone) <p>See Teacher Resource 1(c) for suggestions.</p>

<p>2. Satirical voices</p> <p>(1-2 lessons)</p>	<p>Activity 2(a)</p> <p>Provide students with copies of the following texts with the name of the author removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Humphries: ‘Letter to Richard Allen’ • Michael Leunig: ‘One of the Preambles’ <p>Have students work in pairs. Ask them to speculate who wrote each piece. How did they decide? What gave them clues?</p> <p>Reveal the writers’ names and as a class discuss the students’ speculations and the evidence they compiled.</p> <p>Aim to identify what the voices of these texts have in common (eg. using ridicule to mock, witty approach to the subject, etc.) as well as what is distinctive about them.</p> <p>Students could be encouraged to bring further examples of the work of these writers, or of other satirical voices, to share with the class.</p>
<p>3. Political voices</p> <p>(2 lessons plus 2-3 more if extension activities are included)</p>	<p>Activity 3(a)</p> <p>Provide students with three texts delivered by prime ministers of Australia in vastly different social periods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Menzies: ‘The Forgotten People’ • Paul Keating: ‘The Ghost of the Swagman’ • Kevin Rudd: ‘The Sorry Speech’ www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm <p>Explain that these are complex texts in relation to the concept of their ‘voice’. They are political speeches written to be spoken on a particular occasion for a particular audience, though it is also recognised that they will be printed and read by people. They are usually written by speech writers who attempt to construct the speech in ways that will be in accord with the politician’s usual way of speaking and that reflect his or her values and attitudes.</p> <p>Activity 3(b)</p> <p>Ask the students to read the speeches and consider the questions in Student Handout 3(b).</p> <p>Discuss their responses as a class.</p>

	<p>Activity 3(c) For students who wish to extend their understanding of this topic, additional activities are suggested on Student Handout 3(c).</p>
<p>4. Critical voices (2 lessons)</p>	<p>Activity 4(a) Provide students with the following texts and have them answer the questions on Student Handout 4(a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donald Horne: ‘Country, King, God’ • Charmian Clift: ‘Images in Aspic’ • Anna Morgan: ‘Under the Black Flag’ <p>Discuss their answers as a class.</p>
<p>5. Personal voices (2 lessons)</p>	<p>Activity 5(a) Provide students with the following letters and have them answer the questions on Student Handout 5(a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ned Kelly: ‘The Jerilderie Letter’ • Arthur ‘King George’: Letter to Colonial Secretary, Van Diemen’s Land <p>Compare students’ responses as a class.</p>
<p>6. Fictional voices (3-4 lessons)</p>	<p>Activity 6(a) Talk with students about the device of using a first person narrator to tell a story in fictional texts.</p> <p>Ask them for examples. These might include:</p> <p>Miles Franklin: <i>My Brilliant Career</i> Jessica Anderson: <i>Tirra Lirra by the River</i> Robert Browning: ‘My Last Duchess’ F. Scott Fitzgerald: <i>The Great Gatsby</i> J.D. Salinger: <i>Catcher in the Rye</i></p> <p>Talk about films that use the voice over of a narrator who tells all or part of the tale such as Nullah in Baz Luhrmann’s <i>Australia</i>.</p> <p>Class discussion: What are the advantages of using first person in a text?</p>

Activity 6(b)

Divide students into pairs.

Ask them to write the opening paragraph of a short story that includes at least two characters using third person narration. (Approximately 10–12 lines to be written in 10 minutes)

Students swap paragraphs with their partner. The partner is to rewrite the paragraph using the first person. (You may also wish to try this the other way around: begin with writing in the first person and rewrite in third.)

In pairs discuss the changes that occurred in the texts. Which do they think works better for their own paragraph? Why?

Talk with the class about the kind of changes that were made and the different effects created.

Activity 6(c)

Read aloud Bruce Dawe’s poem ‘A Victorian Hangman Tells his Love’. Students make individual notes on their initial reactions to the poem. Discuss these responses as a class.

What do they consider the poem is really about?

Discuss the idea of creating a fictional persona.

Provide students with the poem and ask them to reread it, focusing on the use of a persona who gives a first person narration. How does Dawe distinguish between the values of the persona and the values of the poet?

See **Teacher Resource 6(c)** for suggestions.

Activity 6(d)

Kate Grenville’s *Lilian’s Story* ‘based on the Sydney eccentric Bea Miles, a famous figure in the streets of Sydney around the middle of the century, is a fictionalised exploration of the forces that might have shaped a woman’s life in that time and place.’ Tell the students a little about the character and life of the ‘real’ Bea Miles (see the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* at <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au>) and of the book’s history as a winner of the Australian/Vogel literary award.

The book has been reprinted several times since 1985 and with a variety of covers.

	<p>Show them the cover at www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/grenvillek/lilian.html and note the comment on the dust jacket that:</p> <p>'Lilian's is a big story in every sense – the story of a woman who is larger than life because she is her own grandest invention.'</p> <p>Provide the students with the extract from <i>Lilian's Story</i>. Ask them to individually prepare answers to the questions on Student Handout 6(d) before discussing the questions as a class.</p> <p>You may wish to show the students a part of the 1996 film <i>Lilian's Story</i> with Ruth Cracknell and Toni Collette.</p>
<p>7. Assessment task</p> <p>(1 lesson + home time)</p>	<p>Students choose from the options provided in Student Handout 7.</p>

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Teacher Resource 1(c)

Writers may, for example, use:

- point of view (eg first person, third person limited, third person omniscient)
- contrast
- juxtaposition
- choice of diction
- choice of imagery
- language patterns
- rhythm
- order of words/ideas etc
- euphemism
- humour
- tone, and so on.

The tone of a text can be described as:

- satirical
- imploring
- disillusioned
- humorous
- judgemental
- cynical
- ambiguous
- passionate
- philosophical
- whimsical
- inspirational
- compassionate
- serious
- wistful
- wry
- aggressive
- confiding
- nostalgic, and so on.

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Student Handout 3(b)

Questions on prime ministers' speeches

- What features, if any, suggest that the text is intended for a spoken delivery?
- Are there any indications that this speech was delivered on a significant occasion? If so, identify any elements of 'voice' that appear to have been influenced by the occasion and the audience.
- How do you think the speaker is attempting to project himself on this occasion? How successfully does he achieve this ambition in his text?

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Student Handout 3(c)

Extension activities on political voices

Group tasks:

- Research the historical period in which each of the speeches in this section of the unit was delivered. Does this information make any difference to your understanding of the texts? Does it reinforce your initial views? Why or why not?
- Prepare and deliver a parody of one or more of these speeches for a program such as *The Glass House* or for a ‘doorstop’ interview for *The Chaser’s War on Everything*.
- Locate other speeches by Menzies, Keating and Rudd on very different occasions from the three you have considered above. Do they have different markers of ‘voice’? If so, can you account for those differences by context, audience, or personal style? You might like to select a range of different contexts such as in an election campaign, delivering a policy position, or responding during question time in Parliament House.

Individual tasks:

- Locate a speech by an Australian politician that you can access in written and spoken form. Does the spoken version change your responses to the text? What are the characteristics of the oral delivery that impact most upon your response as a listener, as opposed to your response as a reader? (Remember that the time and context in which a speech is delivered will influence its style, content and so on.) Prepare a short talk about the differences for your classmates.
- Select one of the speeches and write an analysis of it drawing on your knowledge of ‘voice’ and the contextual research you have carried out.
- Write a speech of your own on a topic to which you have some political commitment (global warming, saving the whales, the meaning of Australia Day ...) Then write an analysis of your speech showing the ways in which you attempted to use elements of ‘voice’ to achieve your objectives.

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Student Handout 4(a)

Critical voices

Questions on the non fiction extracts/texts:

- Of what is the writer of this text critical?
- What qualities in the writing make his/her criticism effective/ineffective?
- What makes this writer's voice distinctive?

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Student Handout 5(a)

Personal voices

Questions on the letters:

- What point of view is put forward by the writer?
- Can you think of any arguments to counter this point of view?
- Do you find the letters persuasive? Why or why not?
- Do you find the letter moving? Why or why not?
- How would you characterise the personal voice of the writer of the letter?
- How would you answer the letter?

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Teacher Resource 6(c)

John Lewis' review of Bruce Dawe's collection of poetry *Sometimes Gladness* in *The Age* 24/10/2001 contains comments about the telling effects of Dawe's use of a persona in this poem:

In the two poems concerning the Ryan hanging, Dawe speaks as Australian social critic. The heart of these poems is profoundly spiritual. Both are polemics against hanging and summon up the ghastly, inexorable process of state execution and the shared, numbed and baffled impotence that many people felt at the time.

In 'A Victorian Hangman Tells His Love', the voice of the persona has an elegant formality, giving ironic edge to the deliberate ambivalence of 'Victorian'. Dawe suggests a state stuck in the past. 'I know your heart is too full at this moment/to say much'. The play on the notion of hangman as bridegroom, considerate to a fault, is blackly, bitterly ironic. The state paraphernalia and ritual of execution is made more terrible by the gentle, almost hesitating voice of the hangman: 'Let us now walk a step'. In its mimicry of an indefatigable politeness, the references to 'our holy Family', the noose as 'something of an heirloom', the verse evokes the way that state execution makes a mockery of all that is human, decent and civilised about our lives: the way we order them and the things we treasure. The condemned man is seen as dying in order to satisfy mindless sensation-seeking: 'you are this evening's headlines'.

See:

www.education.theage.com.au/pagedetail.asp?intpageid=109&strsection=students&intsectionid=3

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Student Handout 6(d)

- What kind of persona does Grenville create for Bea Miles?
- What devices does Grenville use to construct her fictional version of a real character?
- How convincing is the ‘voice’ of Bea Miles?
- Is the reader aware of a writer’s voice running alongside the voice of the narrator as in Dawe’s poem? If so, give examples. If not, justify your point of view.

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Student Handout 7

Choose from one of the following tasks:

- Create a text (series of cartoons, poem/s, power point, drama script, video, speech or essay) that satirises a current Australian social issue.
- Write a letter from a famous historical figure who has been involved in a dramatic incident to someone they love explaining their behaviour. Alternatively create a fictional character and incident and write a similar letter.
- Analyse a politician's speech (eg Barack Obama's inauguration speech at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28751183/) in terms of the voice it projects.
- Write an essay or a speech in which you reveal your personal thoughts about an important social or environmental issue.
- Using first person narrative, write an original short story, poem or the opening pages of a novel.
- Select two Australian films that use the voice-over technique. Choose a scene from each which is particularly effective and compare the ways in which this technique is used.
- Choose two or three of the texts you have studied in this unit and prepare a speech as to whether or not you consider them worthy of inclusion in an Australian anthology.
- Create your own task that is roughly equivalent to any of the above

Be prepared to present your work to a class panel who will be asked to peer review your work particularly in relation to your understanding of, and/or, use of voice.