



2014 VCE English/EAL Text List

The following texts proposed by the English Text Advisory Panel have been approved by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority as suitable for study in Units 3 and 4 in 2014. Texts were selected in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines. The number of texts listed has been amended for 2014 to 20 for List 1, with the inclusion of eight novels. The Film texts category has been replaced with the Multimodal texts category, with the inclusion of two films and one graphic novel. The number of Non-fiction texts has changed from three to two.

Criteria for text selection

Each text selected for the VCE English and English/EAL text lists will:

- have literary merit and be worthy of close study
- be an excellent example of form and genre
- sustain intensive study, raising interesting issues and providing challenging ideas
- be appropriate for both male and female students
- be appropriate for the age and development of students and, in that context, reflect current community standards and expectations.

The text list as a whole will:

- be suitable for a wide range of students, including additional language students
- reflect the cultural diversity of the Victorian community
- include a balance of new and established works
- include texts that display affirming perspectives
- include texts by or about Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- reflect engagement with Asia.

Guidelines for text list

The text list for VCE English/EAL must:

1. Contain a total of 36 available texts:
 - a. 20 (List 1: Area of Study 1)
 - b. 16 (List 2: Area of Study 2) four for each Context:
 - i. The imaginative landscape
 - ii. Whose reality?
 - iii. Encountering conflict
 - iv. Exploring issues of identity and belonging.
2. Represent the full range of texts indicated in the study design in the following approximate proportions:
 - a. Area of Study 1: List 1 (20 texts)
 - i. 8 novels
 - ii. 2 collections of short stories
 - iii. 2 collections of poetry or songs
 - iv. 3 plays
 - v. 3 multimodal texts
 - vi. 2 non-fiction texts.

Multimodal texts are defined as combining two or more communication modes, for example print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations.

b. Area of Study 2: List 2 (16 texts)

For each Context:

- i. 1 novel
- ii. 1 film text

Plus two from the following, depending on relevance to the Context:

- iii. Plays
- iv. Short stories
- v. Poetry
- vi. Other Literature

3. Contain at least five texts for List 1, four texts for List 2 (one in each Context) by or about Australians
4. Contain texts that are widely available, preferably for sale.
5. Contain no titles in common with those on the VCE Literature list.
6. Be reviewed annually with approximately 25 per cent of the texts being changed; no text should appear for more than four consecutive years or fewer than two years.
7. Be accompanied by full bibliographic details where necessary.

Text selection – advice to schools

Texts for study in Units 3 and 4 English/EAL are grouped into two lists: List 1 for Area of Study 1, Reading and Responding, which focuses on the reading of a range of literary texts to develop critical and supported responses in relation to Outcome 1; and List 2 for Area of Study 2, Creating and Presenting, which focuses on reading and writing and their interconnection, in relation to Outcome 2.

Teachers should consider the lists in conjunction with the relevant Text Selection advice published on page 23 of the *VCE English/EAL Study Design 2008-2014* for Units 3 and 4.

At least one of the selected texts in each of Units 3 and 4 should be an imaginative print text such as a novel, a play, a collection of short stories or poetry.

A multimodal text may be selected from List 1 or List 2 but not both. If a student writes on a multimodal text in Section A of the examination, they must not write on a multimodal text as their main text in Section B.

At least one of the selected texts should be by an Australian or about Australians.

The annotations are provided to assist teachers with selection of texts in accordance with the requirements in the VCE English/EAL study design. It is important to avoid genre confusion. A film version of a novel, short story, play or non-fiction text is not acceptable for the purposes of the examination, although it might be used in the classroom for teaching purposes.

Note: While the VCAA considers all the texts on this list suitable for study, teachers should be aware that with some texts there may be sensitivities in relation to certain issues. In selecting texts for study, teachers should make themselves aware of these issues prior to introducing the text to students.

The VCAA does not prescribe editions; any complete edition may be used. The bibliographic information is provided to assist teachers to obtain texts and is correct, as far as possible, at the time of publication. Publishing details may change from time to time and teachers should consult the VCAA Bulletin regularly for any amendments or alterations to the list.

Key to codes

This list is presented alphabetically by author, grouped according to the kind of text. Abbreviations in brackets after the titles signify:

(A) This text meets the Australian requirement

(#) Bracketed numbers indicate the number of years that a text has appeared on the English text list: (1) for example, indicates that 2014 is the first year a text has appeared on the list.

List 1

Novels

Atwood, Margaret, *Cat's Eye* (3)
Bronte, Emily, *Wuthering Heights* (2)
Dickens, Charles, *A Christmas Carol* (4)
Hamid, Mohsin, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (4)
Malouf, David, *Ransom* (A) (4)
Matar, Hisham, *In The Country of Men* (2)
Tóibín, Colm, *Brooklyn* (2)
Winton, Tim, *Cloudstreet* (A) (1)

Short stories

Carver, Raymond, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (3)
Stories for study: 'Fat', 'Neighbors', 'The Idea', 'Are you a Doctor?', 'The Father', 'Nobody Said Anything', 'Sixty Acres', 'Night School', 'Collectors', 'What do you do in San Francisco?', 'The Student's Wife', 'Put Yourself in My Shoes', 'Jerry and Molly and Sam', 'Why, Honey?', 'How about This?', 'Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes', 'Signals', 'Will you Please be Quiet, Please?'
Ngozi Adichie, Chimamanda, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (1)
Stories for study: 'Cell One', 'A Private Experience', 'Ghosts', 'On Monday of Last Week', 'Jumping Monkey Hill', 'The Thing Around Your Neck', 'The American Embassy', 'The Shivering', 'The Arrangers of Marriage', 'Tomorrow Is Too Far', 'The Headstrong Historian'

Plays

Davis, Jack, *No Sugar* (A) (1)
Rose, Reginald, *Twelve Angry Men* (4)
Shakespeare, William, *Henry IV Part I* (3)

Poetry/Songs

Harwood, Gwen, *Selected Poems* (A) (2)
Owen, Wilfred, *The War Poems* (ed. Jon Stallworthy) (3)

Multimodal texts

Film

Perkins, Rachel (dir), *Mabo* (A) (1)
Mankiewicz, Joseph (dir), *All About Eve* (1)

Other

Spiegelman, Art, *The Complete Maus* (1)

Non-fiction texts

Funder, Anna, *Stasiland* (A) (2)
Wolff, Tobias, *This Boy's Life* (1)

List 2

The imaginative landscape

Kinsella, John, *Peripheral Light – Selected and New Poems* (A) (3)
Munro, Alice, *The View from Castle Rock* (2)
Perkins, Rachel (dir), *One Night the Moon* (A) (4)
Thornell, Kristel, *Night Street* (A) (1)

Whose reality?

Frayn, Michael, *Spies* (4)

Leunig, Michael, *The Lot: In words* (A) (3)

Levinson, Barry (dir), *Wag the Dog* (1)

Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman* (2)

Encountering conflict

Beresford, Bruce (dir), *Paradise Road* (A) (4)

Brecht, Bertolt, *Life of Galileo* (2)

Greene, Graham, *The Quiet American* (3)

Stack, Megan, *Every Man in this Village is a Liar* (1)

Exploring issues of identity and belonging

Fabian, Anthony (dir), *Skin* (3)

Lawler, Ray, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (A) (2)

McCullers, Carson, *The Member of the Wedding* (4)

Miller, Patti, *The Mind of a Thief* (A) (1)

Annotations

These annotations are provided to assist teachers with text selection. The comments are not intended to represent the only possible interpretation or a favoured reading of a text. The list is arranged alphabetically by author in text types. Films are listed by title.

List 1

Novels

Atwood, Margaret, *Cat's Eye*, Virago Press, 2009 (3)

The adult narrator, a Canadian painter of renown, reflects on her childhood. At the heart of her recollection is her frightening relationship with the young Cordelia and her acolytes. The novel examines the shifting and misshapen nature of their friendship, as power moves from one to the other. In the background is the development of Toronto, the power of art and of memory, and the things left unsaid in families. While the plot may appear to be open-ended, the unresolved nature of the text highlights a central question Atwood asks the reader: is the past history, or does it stay with us forever?

Bronte, Emily, *Wuthering Heights*, Penguin Black Classic, 2003 (2)

Bronte's classic tale of love and revenge has fascinated readers since its publication in 1847. Considered scandalous upon its release, the unfolding of the love between Catherine and Heathcliff – and the lives that they destroy in the process – still resonates today. Set on the Yorkshire Moors and spanning two generations, the story of the Lintons and the Earnshaws is told using multiple narrators. From moments of tenderness to moments of horror, the novel traverses the range of human emotions. It is a masterpiece of storytelling.

Dickens, Charles, *A Christmas Carol*, Penguin Classics, 2008 (4)

Ebenezer Scrooge. Tiny Tim. The Ghost of Christmas Past. Bob Cratchit. Bah, Humbug! This is a novel about redemption. Scrooge has lost his soul and needs a spooky lesson in reaching out to his fellow man. Also a novel about social justice and the plight of the working poor, it shows 'wealth-building' values for what they truly are: greed and pettiness. Don't confuse the novel with its many film interpretations; Dickens may never have produced a sharper piece of writing than *A Christmas Carol*. It is, at once, a classic ghost story, a searing polemic, and an utterly compelling narrative about what it is to be human.

Hamid, Mohsin, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamish Hamilton (Penguin), 2008 (4)

This provocatively titled novel explores controversial terrain. The narrator, Changez, an American-university educated Pakistani, directly addresses an American companion with whom he is sharing a table outside a café in Pakistan. Changez's personal and political narrative reveals post-9/11 mistrust and suspicion, and invites the reader to think about these difficult and controversial matters. The novel is rich in irony, exploring views on love, prejudice, lifestyle and the behaviour of individuals and countries. The open ending adds to its fascinating narrative structure and content.

Malouf, David, *Ransom*, Vintage, 2009 (A) (4)

Malouf re-imagines the world of the *Iliad*, including a little-known episode of the Trojan Wars. Maddened by Hector's slaying of his dear friend Patroclus, Achilles takes revenge and subsequently violates Hector's corpse. Priam, King of Troy and Hector's father, journeys to Achilles' camp seeking to ransom his son's body. He travels in a donkey cart escorted only by the carter but aided by the god Hermes. The mission succeeds, delivering to Priam enrichment in life and legendary status after death. *Ransom* explores universal themes of paternal pride and love, and liberation of the spirit – as relevant today as in classical Greece.

Matar, Hisham, *In the Country of Men*, Penguin, 2006 (2)

Suleiman, a young Libyan boy in the 1970s, enjoys playing games with his friends. However, all is not as it seems for the young 'man of the house' who is often obliged to look after his distressed mother while his father is 'away on business'. In a male-dominated society ruled by a tyrant, everyone's safety is dependent on compliance with the ruling group, and Baba's defiance has life-shattering consequences for himself and his family. Who has betrayed whom? In this story about personal and public injustices in an authoritarian society, Suleiman's narrative presents the reader with troubling questions.

Tóibín, Colm, *Brooklyn*, Picador, 2009 (2)

In the 1950s Eilis, an Irish girl from a small town, moves to the USA to better her life. She obtains employment, but suffers severe homesickness as she settles into a ghetto-like Irish

enclave in Brooklyn. After meeting a kind Italian-American boy, she plans an American future. However, when a tragedy calls her back to Ireland, and she realises that her position in the community has improved, she faces the dilemma of the migrant – the old country or the new? Tóibín lucidly presents two cultures, the dream-like quality that infuses whichever is the current ‘other’, and the seductive power of home.

Winton, Tim, *Cloudstreet*, Penguin, 2007 (A) (1)

Through hapless circumstance the Lambs and Pickles families find themselves living together in a ramshackle house in Perth that comes to be called ‘Cloudstreet’. Winton explores whether we make our own luck or whether chance rules our lives, the complexity, humour and tragedy in family relationships and a brand of Australian identity and childhood forged during and in post-World War II Australia. In the background there is the Lambs’ son Fish, whose mysterious connection with water, a result of a near-drowning incident that left him disabled as a child, hints at our subconscious and often ignored spiritual connection to the world around us.

Short stories

Carver, Raymond, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, Vintage, 2003 (2)

Stories for study: ‘*Fat*’, ‘*Neighbors*’, ‘*The Idea*’, ‘*Are you a Doctor?*’, ‘*The Father*’, ‘*Nobody Said Anything*’, ‘*Sixty Acres*’, ‘*Night School*’, ‘*Collectors*’, ‘*What Do You Do in San Francisco?*’, ‘*The Student’s Wife*’, ‘*Put Yourself in My Shoes*’, ‘*Jerry and Molly and Sam*’, ‘*Why, Honey?*’, ‘*How about This?*’, ‘*Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes*’, ‘*Signals*’, ‘*Will you Please be Quiet, Please?*’

Raymond Carver’s highly regarded minimalist style provides us with a series of snapshots of ordinary American lives. The characters have difficulty relating to others, experience emptiness, or feel disconnected from both themselves and others, but they also experience the small joys of everyday life. From the tale of a woman who dials a man by mistake or a father who is exasperated by his family’s pet dog, to a young boy who catches a big fish in order to impress his quarrelling parents, Carver’s collection of short stories explores the ways in which our lives are a mix of humour and pathos.

Ngozi Adichie, Chimamanda, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Harper Collins (Fourth Estate), 2009 (1)

Stories for study: ‘*Cell One*’, ‘*A Private Experience*’, ‘*Ghosts*’, ‘*On Monday of Last Week*’, ‘*Jumping Monkey Hill*’, ‘*The Thing Around Your Neck*’, ‘*The American Embassy*’, ‘*The Shivering*’, ‘*The Arrangers of Marriage*’, ‘*Tomorrow Is Too Far*’, ‘*The Headstrong Historian*’

This collection of stories explores the parallel lives of characters in contemporary Nigeria, and the Nigerian émigré community in the United States. Adichie’s work comments on cultural misunderstandings not just between countries but within them. The stories are often confronting, as her characters search for an escape; from the violence of their environment, and often from their tragic lives. Many of the stories address the universal theme of how people cope in the face of injustice, within the fraught context of many African societies. In contrast, the American-based stories highlight the problems associated with isolation and the desire to connect with others.

Plays

Davis, Jack, *No Sugar*, Currency Press, 2012 (A) (1)

Spanning five years during the Depression and set in Western Australia, Jack Davis’ social drama traces how the Millimurra family battle the racism, brutality and indifference of the white bureaucracy, constabulary and their black tracker brothers. Davis’ use of language reveal the political inequality, wanton violence, moral corruption and sexual exploitation inflicted on local indigenous people by the ‘wetjalas’. Forcibly relocated, often incarcerated, deprived of basic freedoms and justice, the Milimurras draw their strength from family and their land. This play challenges the audience to reflect on Australia’s past.

Rose, Reginald, *Twelve Angry Men*, Samuel French Ltd, 1997 (4)

The play takes its audience into the jury room where a group of twelve men is performing its civic duty. Through the jury’s interactions, each man reveals himself more fully: his strengths, weaknesses and above all his prejudices. The eighth juror is initially alone in opposing a ‘guilty’ verdict, but as the members of the jury deliberate, we see at work a judicial system that values the right of the accused to be ‘innocent until proved guilty’ and the duty of a jury to explore ‘reasonable doubt’.

Shakespeare, William, *Henry IV Part One*, Penguin, 2005 (3)

Prince Hal is a rebel. He has rejected his position at court for the less than salubrious London underworld. His companions are thieves, drunks, and women of dubious reputation. His father, the eponymous Henry IV, is not amused, having come to the throne himself in a coup and needing now to find a way to retain the crown. *Henry IV, Part One*, Shakespeare's finest history, is sharp, suspenseful, and witty. It features the irrepressible Sir John Falstaff whose language is thought by some to transcend even that of Hamlet. It is a play about fathers and sons, enemies and friends, loyalty and betrayal, with the best elements of the playwright's tragedies and comedies.

Multimodal**Films*****All About Eve*, Director: Joseph Mankiewicz, 1950 (1)**

Winner of the Oscar for best picture in 1950, *All About Eve* is one of the classics of 20th Century film. Notable for its strong female roles, played by Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, Celeste Holm and Thelma Ritter, all of whom were nominated for Oscars, the film focuses on the aging star Margo Channing, a Broadway actress renowned for being difficult. When ardent fan Eve Harrington expresses her admiration for her idol, Margo is at first flattered, but as Eve starts to work her way further into Margo's life she starts to suspect that Eve is not quite what she seems. The extremely witty screenplay highlights issues of gender, ageing, fame and trust. (Classification: PG)

***Mabo*, Director: Perkins, Rachel, 2012 (A) (1)**

Mabo charts the journey leading up to the High Court of Australia overturning the legal doctrine of terra nullius, exploring the professional and personal challenges of one of Australia's most well-known Indigenous activists, Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo. The film explores Eddie's public life, the sacrifices made in order to change discrimination and injustice enshrined in law, and the impact on his personal life and relationship with his wife Bonita. A story about love and history, director Rachel Perkins aims to 'present Indigenous iconic stories to Australians' and interweave them with the 'Australian narrative'. (Classification: PG)

Other**Spiegelman, Art, *The Complete Maus*, Penguin, 2003 (1)**

Using the graphic novel form, Art Spiegelman constructs a dual narrative that explores both the disturbing experiences of his parents during the Holocaust and his own contemporary relationship with his father Vladek. A difficult man in his old age, Vladek shows remarkable fortitude and resilience by surviving Auschwitz, but the price he and Anja pay is a great one. This graphic novel highlights themes of survival, guilt, suffering and family conflict and depicts Spiegelman's struggle to tell his father's story.

Poetry/Songs**Owen, Wilfred, *The War Poems*, Jon Stallworthy (ed.), Chatto & Windus (Random), 1994 (3)**

Wilfred Owen is regarded as the greatest of the World War I poets. His poems explore the futility of war and its physical and psychological toll on front-line soldiers. Owen also challenges the glorified notion of dying for one's country. He highlights the contradictions between the realities of the battlefield and the pointlessness of death. His poems reflect an intimate understanding of being a soldier in the trenches and his descriptions are sharp and brutally honest, as revealed in his most famous poems: 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and 'Futility'.

Harwood, Gwen, *Selected Poems*, Penguin, 2001 (A) (2)

Gwen Harwood is one of Australia's finest poets. Her work deals with a range of subjects, from the relationships between children and parents and the domestic aspects of women's lives, to the impact of societal expectations on individual identity and the role of art and memory in shaping subjectivity. Harwood's poetry both masters and challenges poetic forms and conventions. The poems experiment with voice, play with language and are often underpinned by a deeply-grounded, satirical wit.

Non-fiction**Funder, Anna, *Stasiland*, Text Publishing, 2011 (A) (2)**

The German Democratic Republic's rule was 'Either you are for us or an enemy!' One in every 6.5 East Germans was a Stasi employee, spying on fellow citizens. When the GDR fell,

they shredded all the files. Sometime later, thirty-one people sit in one room reconstructing the files (had they forty workers it would take 375 years). Anna Funder advertised for ex Stasi, East German Secret Service; she interviewed them and their victims. Compelling accounts of the insidiousness of the Stasi emerge, horrific yet sometimes amusing. The totalitarian state of the GDR is strangely mourned by some of its survivors and forgotten by the rest of Germany.

Wolff, Tobias, *This Boy's Life*, Bloomsbury, 1989 (1)

Ten-year-old Tobias Wolff is constantly on the road as his mother desperately seeks to build a better life for them both. Wolff finds life on the move very challenging as he struggles with the ever-changing routine and the changing faces of the many people he meets. When they finally settle in Utah, he decides to change his name to Jack, after his hero Jack London, to mark the beginning of his new life. This memoir traces Jack's experiences growing up against the background of a violent and gritty 1950s America.

List 2

The imaginative landscape

Film

***One Night the Moon*, Director: Rachel Perkins, 2006 (A) (4)**

Set in 1932 against the dramatic, ancient landscape of the Flinders Ranges, *One Night the Moon* explores differing ways that indigenous and non-indigenous Australians relate to the land. The viewer is drawn into the landscape by sparse dialogue coupled with stunning cinematography and music. Characters, including Paul Kelly as the father, sing their inner thoughts and feelings, whilst the camera captures light, darkness, clouds, flora and especially the moon that magically lures a young girl from her home. The image of the 'lost child' in the Australian landscape and the powerful use of song and scenery to convey the story combine to capture the imagination of the viewer. (Classification: M)

Poetry

Kinsella, John, *Peripheral Light – Selected and New Poems*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2006 (A) (3)

Kinsella's poetry, much of it set in the Western Australian wheat belt where he grew up, is characterised by the natural beauty and harshness of the landscape and the unnatural changes wrought by man. His exploration of cycles of nature, such as drought and fire, coupled with human intervention, highlights a rural world threatened by salinity, pesticides, erosion and indigenous dispossession. Many of these poems are foreboding, challenging the pastoral idyll depicted by earlier poets that reflects on beautiful landscapes of the accepted kind. Kinsella's poems enable students to explore and present their own links to the physical world.

Short stories

Munro, Alice, *The View from Castle Rock*, Vintage, 2006 (2)

Alice Munro draws on her own family history in this collection of stories. Her eighteenth century ancestors survived the harsh landscape of the Scottish highlands with their fanciful stories, and some of them dreamed of – had the eponymous 'view' of – another land. Following the family's migration to Canada, we catch glimpses of the lives of Munro's grandparents and parents in their farming communities, and eventually of Munro herself, as she brings her own imagination to bear on the sometimes stifling environment of small town Ontario.

Novel

Thornell, Kristel, *Night Street*, Allen and Unwin, 2010 (A) (1)

Night Street explores the relationship between art, landscape and perspective. Set in Melbourne, the novel portrays familiar places through the eyes of artist Clarice Beckett, a student of McCubbin and Meldrum in the 1920s. Thornell takes readers into the streets that become Clarice's studio and, through her art, depicts aspects of the landscape that other artists of the time choose to ignore. Despite her struggle for recognition, Clarice embraces life and art without a care for the views of her critics. The novel offers students a chance to explore the imaginative landscape through the eyes of an artist and consider the way people shape their lives in spite of barriers. As a character who isolates herself within her art, Clarice stands by her individual perspective, convinced of her own choices. While struggling against

the constraints of the times, the role of women and her unsettled personal life, in art Clarice finds tranquillity.

Whose reality?

Novel

Frayn, Michael, *Spies*, Faber and Faber, 2005 (4)

The aging narrator, Stephen, returns to the London streets of his childhood home. Through his reminiscences, it becomes clear that all was not as it seemed in the younger Stephen's neighbourhood. With the Second World War as a backdrop, *Spies* tells the story of the 'infiltration of the Germans' into the young Stephen's environs. Frayn's protagonist reminisces with a delightful sense of irony about his naïve attempts to impose a sense of order on the inevitable chaos of childhood perception. The novel is a touching, and sometimes tense, exploration of the blurring between fact and fiction, actuality and perception.

Play

Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman*, First Copyright 1949, Methuen Drama Student Edition, 2010 (2)

Salesman Willy Loman's tragic disintegration embodies the plight of all humans who strive to preserve their significance in a society which measures a man's worth by his material and financial success. Trapped among the rising, impersonal Brooklyn tenements and within the cruelly elusive and brittle American Dream, Willy desperately seeks refuge in his dubious memories of better times. Meanwhile, Willy's wife and two sons each struggle to support the crumbling man they love, despite recognising that Willy's skewed perceptions are at odds with their own views of reality. Miller's modern tragedy compels pathos whilst critiquing the fallibility of human perception.

Other Literature

Leunig, Michael, *The Lot: In Words*, Viking, Penguin, 2008 (A) (3)

Many Victorians will be familiar with the unconventional views of reality that Michael Leunig presents in his cartoons. In this collection of essays, Leunig effortlessly and poignantly makes connections between seemingly disparate things, treating the ills of the modern world with a good dose of the sublime. He counterbalances scathing social criticism with an undercurrent of inescapable hope; a vision of the world as enchanting and full of mystery. His essays contain elements of the parable, of memoir and soliloquy, and also of poetry. His ruminations touch on just about everything, but the single common thread is an unwavering propensity to tell the truth as he sees it.

Film

***Wag the Dog*, Director: Barry Levinson, 1997 (1)**

The President is in a fix. Political fixer Conrad Brean and his off-sider Winifred Ames enlist Hollywood producer and professional fiction-maker, Stanley Motss, to divert attention away from the Presidential woes. The trio invents a war with Albania, complete with an anthem and an heroic prisoner of war. This film examines the power of political spin and the imaginary worlds that can be created, as well as how easily unsuspecting members of the public can be manipulated by the lies that are spread by the media. In the end, the lines between fact and fiction are blurred so much that it becomes dangerous to seek the truth behind the lies. (Classification: M)

Encountering conflict

Play

Brecht, Bertolt, *Life of Galileo*, Methuen Drama, 1986 (2)

Scientist and astronomer, Galileo Galilei, is faced with a crisis of conscience: either he must recant his heretical views of the universe or face torture and excommunication from the Catholic Church. Galileo's studies also bring him into conflict with those nearest and dearest to him – his daughter, his students and his supporters. Brecht's text explores the ways in which one event can be the catalyst for a range of conflicts and how one man's beliefs can place him in danger.

Novel

Greene, Graham, *The Quiet American*, Vintage (Random), 2004 (3)

Set in Vietnam, Graham Greene's novel immerses readers in the private and political conflicts of his protagonist, Thomas Fowler, a cynical, aging British journalist. Amidst tension and

violence, Fowler struggles to reconcile his credo of non-involvement with his conflicting moral, emotional and ideological views. When Fowler meets Alden Pyle, the 'quiet American', he encounters the dangerous innocence of this misguided but well-intentioned 'soldier of Democracy'. Fowler's antagonism is compounded by the younger man's challenge to win Fowler's mistress, Phuong (who represents Vietnam itself). Fowler's journey propels him towards 'engagement' as he draws closer to the carnage of war and his realisation that Pyle is unstoppable.

Film

***Paradise Road*, Director: Bruce Beresford, 1997 (A) (4)**

Based on a true story, a group of women from diverse backgrounds, classes and nationalities become prisoners in a Japanese concentration camp following the fall of Singapore in World War II. Prisoners and guards confront each other in what is certainly not 'paradise'. Faced with adversity, the women slowly understand that their survival is dependent on their individual and collective responses to the conflicts and horrors they encounter. The establishment of a vocal choir provides them with the impetus to find ways of working together to retain dignity and to find solace in the face of overwhelming challenges. (Classification: M15+)

Other literature

Stack, Megan, *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*, Scribe, 2011 (1)

Award winning war correspondent, Megan Stack, bases this memoir on her experiences in the Middle East. Her narrative deals with personal and political struggles in a post-September 11 world more perplexing than the paradox of the book's title. Beautifully written and at times uplifting, she tells the stories of people who risk their lives to have their stories told in the pursuit of freedom. Yet ultimately the book is unified by Stack's own story as a woman in a number of combat zones, encountering the savage reality of the human cost of war and the brutality of such conflict.

Exploring issues of identity and belonging

Novel

McCullers, Carson, *The Member of the Wedding*, Penguin Books, 2001 (4)

Twelve-year-old Frankie Addams feels trapped in an endless summer. At odds with her growing body and the shifting world around her, she yearns for a sense of belonging. When her brother Jarvis announces his plans to marry, Frankie fantasises about the forthcoming wedding, and sees herself as the third member of the new family. Set against the backdrop of the Second World War, and in a town where racial and gender expectations dominate people's interactions, *The Member of the Wedding* invites the reader to question the societal, cultural and familial expectations that both define and constrain us.

Play

Lawler, Ray, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, First edition 1957, Currency Press, 2011 (A) (2)

Cane cutters Roo and Barney return to suburban Melbourne for their seventeenth summer lay-off. Olive awaits them, excited but anxious that her conservative friend Pearl might replace Nancy who has recently married, abandoning her long-term liaison with serial-womaniser Barney. Six characters, spanning three generations, negotiate the effects of time on their perceptions of themselves and others. Only Olive's mother, Emma, and Pearl, can see the crumbling heroes and the unsustainable façade Olive and her young neighbour, Bubba, refuse to confront. Ray Lawler's examination of 1950s masculinity, Australian identity and loyalty captures the struggles of trying to build happiness into ordinary lives.

Other literature

Miller, Patti, *The Mind of a Thief*, University of Queensland Press, 2012 (A) (1)

Patti Miller gets so much more than she bargains for when she begins to research the story of her family's origins in Wellington, New South Wales. Not only does she uncover the history of her family, she is challenged to the very core of her identity. Miller, who is white, has been teaching a group of Aboriginal women to write their own stories, when unexpectedly, one of the women, Joyce, suggests that Miller herself, might also have black ancestry. The result of this exchange leads the reader into a narrative that weaves Miller's responses to her new found heritage and her altered sense of identity and belonging.

Film

***Skin*, Director: Anthony Fabian, 2008 (3)**

The film opens with South African woman Sandra Laing finally enjoying the right to vote, in the contemporary Rainbow Nation. Sandra's journey is traced in this biopic: from a child of Afrikaaner parents unaware of their mixed ancestry in apartheid South Africa, to an adult who appears to have resolved issues of identity and belonging despite horrendous obstacles. Her parents were shocked to have a 'Coloured' child, while Sandra was shunned in her own community. Classified 'White' after a successful legal appeal by her parents, Sandra subsequently sought re-classification. The audience glimpses the terrible price paid by individuals under the political system of apartheid. At the same time, we are confronted with significant questions about how identities, and a sense of belonging, are formed and sustained. (Classification: M) |