



SELECTIONS FROM VCE SEASON OF EXCELLENCE

# VCAA Bulletin Supplement 1

## English/ESL Text list 2007

The following texts proposed by the English Text Selection Panel have been approved by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority as suitable for study in 2007.

### Criteria for text selection

Texts have been selected in accordance with the following guidelines.

Each text selected for the VCE English and English (ESL) text list, including school-selected texts, 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 second language students
- reflect the cultural diversity of the Victorian community
- include a balance of new and established works
- include texts that display affirming perspectives.

### Guidelines for text selection

The text list for VCE English/ESL must:

1. Contain 30 available texts
2. Represent the full range of texts indicated in the study design in the following approximate proportions:
  - thirteen novels
  - 3 collections of short stories
  - 2 collections of poetry or songs
  - 4 plays
  - 4 non-print texts
  - 4 non-fiction texts



3. Contain at least ten texts by or about Australians, distributed across as many of the text categories (see point 2) as possible
4. Contain both popular and frequently-taught texts
5. Contain print and non-print texts that are freely available, preferably for sale
6. Contain no titles in common with those on the VCE Literature list
7. Be reviewed annually, with approximately 25% of the texts being changed. No text should appear for more than four consecutive years and newly selected texts should appear on the list for at least two years to allow for consolidation of use in the classroom
8. Be accompanied by full bibliographic details where necessary.

The annotations are provided to assist with selection of texts in accordance with the requirements in the English study design. It is important to avoid genre confusion. Where, for example, the text is designated PF (prose fiction), a non-print version is not acceptable for purposes of the examination, although it might be used in the classroom for teaching purposes.

Teachers are reminded that:

At least three of the four texts studied should be selected from a list published annually in the VCAA Bulletin. The fourth text, if not chosen from the set list, should be selected in accordance with the guidelines published annually in the VCAA Bulletin.

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

It should be noted that there will be no provision for students to write in the examination on any text not on the list. Such texts may be used for the achievement of outcomes, but not for the examination. The guidelines referred to are provided above.

It should also be noted that for all students, no more than one non-print text may be studied.

**Note:** While the VCAA considers all the texts on this list suitable for study, teachers should be aware that in some instances sensitivity may be needed where particular issues are raised in certain texts. In selecting texts for study teachers should make themselves aware of these issues prior to introducing the text to students.

## Key to codes

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

A This text meets the Australian requirement

PF This text meets the prose fiction requirement

(#) Bracketed numbers indicate the number of years in the current cycle that a text has appeared on the English text list.

**Please note the change in the numbering system: In previously published text lists this number indicated the number of years a text had appeared of the text list prior to the year of publication of the list. A book in its fourth year would therefore have been listed as (3), whereas under the new system will be listed as (4).**

## Novels

- Allende, Isobel, *Of Love and Shadows* (PF) (1)  
 Ammaniti, Niccolo, *I'm Not Scared* (PF) (3)  
 Behrendt, Larissa, *Home* (A) (PF) (1)  
 Camus, Albert, *The Plague* (PF) (3)  
 Dickens, Charles, *Hard Times* (PF) (1)  
 Greene, Graham, *The Quiet American* (PF) (4)  
 Haddon, Mark, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (PF) (3)  
 Harrison, Charles Yale, *Generals Die in Bed* (PF) (2)  
 Hosseini, Khaled, *The Kite Runner* (PF) (2)  
 Macauley, Wayne, *Blueprints for a Barbed-Wire Canoe* (A) (PF) (2)  
 O'Brien, Tim, *In the Lake of the Woods* (PF) (2)  
 Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (PF) (1)  
 Tyler, Anne, *The Accidental Tourist* (PF) (2)

## Short stories

- Winton, Tim, *Minimum of Two* (A) (PF) (3)  
 Wolff, Tobias, *The Stories of Tobias Wolff* (PF) (3)

## Plays

- Bolt, Robert, *A Man for all Seasons* (1)  
 Miller, Arthur, *A View from the Bridge* (3)  
 Rayson, Hannie, *Inheritance* (A) (2)  
 Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet* (4)

## Poetry

- Kelly, Paul, *Don't Start Me Talking: Lyrics 1984–2004* (A) (2)  
 Plath, Sylvia, *Selected Poems* (1985) (2)

## Non-print texts (film, video and multimedia productions)

- Citizen Kane* (1)  
 'Fine Line' (A) (Episodes 1, 2 and 5) (2) (Television series shown on SBS Television in 2004) (2) (*Combined DVD available from Marcom Projects, phone: (07) 3340 8900*)  
*Lantana* (A) (3)  
*Look Both Ways* (A) (1)  
*Voices & Visions from India* (A) (2) (CD-ROM) The categories for study and on which examination questions will be based are: Being Different, Family, Love, Marriage. (*The CD-ROM is available from the Asia Education Foundation, Level 4, Sidney Myer Asia Centre, The University of Melbourne, phone: (03) 8344 4800*)

## Non-fiction texts

- Gaita, Raimond, *Romulus, My Father* (A) (3)  
 Levi, Primo, *If This Is a Man* (3)  
 Pax, Salem, *The Baghdad Blog* (N.B. Print version (Text Publishing, 2004) only to be studied) (2)  
 Xinran, *Sky Burial* (2)

## 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. 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 and VCAA website regularly for any amendments or alterations to the list.

### Novels

**Allende, Isobel, *Of Love and Shadows* (PF, Black Swan, 1988)**

*Of Love and Shadows* is a political novel which examines the circumstances in an unnamed South American country in the 1970s. Using the framework of an unfolding love story between the main protagonist, Irene Beltrán, and her photographer lover Francisco, Allende examines and exposes the human rights abuses under Pinochet's regime in Chile. Allende combines an affectionate description of the strength and magic which can be found in a community suffering horrible oppression with a profound understanding of characters and motivations. She has created a dense text which utilises imagery of good and evil, of hope and oppression, of defeat and defiance. Allende explores the triumph of the human spirit under an oppressive regime.

**Ammaniti, Niccolo, *I'm Not Scared* (PF, Text Publishing, 2003)**

In this compelling, powerful and engaging novel, we meet Michele Armitrano, a nine-year-old boy living in the small, close-knit Italian village where he was born. His summer holidays are spent in the company of his friends exploring the neighbouring countryside on their bikes. During one of their games he makes a startling chance discovery which will change his life and the lives of all the families in the village forever. Michele's extraordinary encounter forces him to see the villagers and even his own family in a completely different light. In the process, he is faced with a moral dilemma and conflict of loyalties which culminate in a searing final scene.

This internationally acclaimed novel, translated from the Italian, is a concise and accessible text which invites examination at a number of levels.

**Behrendt, Larissa, *Home* (PF, University of Queensland Press, 2004) (A)**

Larissa Behrendt has had a distinguished career lecturing, practising and writing extensively on the Law. *Home* is Behrendt's first novel. It is a heartfelt and largely autobiographical account of the impact of government policies which saw the removal of indigenous children from their families. Candice, a successful city lawyer, visits her ancestral home and begins a personal journey as she learns of Garibooli, her grandmother, who was wrenched from her family as a young girl. Through Garibooli and her extended family, Behrendt explores issues of race, identity, loss, and ultimately, survival.

**Camus, Albert, *The Plague* (PF, Penguin Books, 2003)**

Set during the 1940s, Camus' modern classic examines the reaction of the Algerian town of Oran, which is devastated as a result of a plague brought by rats. Described as a 'chronicle' rather than a novel by the author, the text charts the lives of a number of characters during this time of calamity, notably the courageous Dr Rieux who, through his dedicated work and collaboration with others in their fight against the pestilence, comes to recognise that in spite of their foolishness and

ignorance, 'men are more to be admired than despised'. Not only does the novel act as a kind of parable for that other contemporary 'plague', the German occupation of France in World War II, but it also provides Camus with a human situation to further explore his philosophical system of the 'Absurd', which has intrigued and challenged students who have in previous years studied his novel *The Outsider*.

**Dickens, Charles, *Hard Times* (PF, Penguin Classics)**

*Hard Times* begins in a nineteenth century classroom in Coketown, a fictional city where rapid industrialisation has led to dehumanising conditions. The classroom is represented as a microcosm for the world outside; a factory-style method of mass education is designed to produce future workers who are treated like machines. While exploring social conditions and the role of education, Dickens also shows the impact of the attempt to eliminate imagination and inculcate facts and statistics on the family of Thomas Gradgrind.

**Greene, Graham, *The Quiet American* (PF, Vintage, 2001)**

The narrator of Greene's classic novel, set in Indochina in 1955, is Thomas Fowler, a world-weary English reporter who is nevertheless an acute observer of foreign circles at a time when Vietnam is trying to assert independence from French colonial rule. *The Quiet American* is the idealistic Alden Pyle, sent to promote democracy under the guise of humanitarian aid. Phuong is the Vietnamese woman for whose affections both men compete. Graham Greene's novel evokes a time and place on the brink of change and turmoil. *The Quiet American* raises questions about the motives of individuals and foreign political interests which remain as relevant and interesting now as they did at the time the novel was written in 1955.

**Haddon, Mark, *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time* (PF, Random House, 2004)**

This is a fascinating 'detective' novel that is divided into chapters headed by prime numbers – 'Prime numbers are like life. They are very logical but you could never work out the rules, even if you spent all your time thinking about them.' It is this judgment that sums up the perspective of the narrator. Christopher John Francis Boone is 15 years old and has Asperger's Syndrome (a form of autism). This moving and often refreshingly funny novel deals with rites of passage, but the difficulties encountered by the main character's journey are exacerbated by the fact that he can neither express nor understand emotions and cannot decipher the world around him.

The detached observational tone of the narration allows the reader to step inside the mind of someone who sees the world in his own idiosyncratic way, yet still manages to reveal much about people and the way they behave.

**Harrison, Charles Yale, *Generals Die in Bed* (PF, Penguin Books, 2003)**

Drawing on his own experiences in World War I, Charles Yale Harrison tells a stark and poignant story of a young man sent to fight on the Western Front. This novel brings to life a period of history seen through the eyes of a 20-year-old narrator, who reminds us that there is neither glamour nor glory in war.

**Hosseini, Khaled, *The Kite Runner* (PF, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004)**

A timely and topical novel, *The Kite Runner* is the first Afghani novel to be published in English. Written by an Afghani physician and resident of California, *The Kite Runner* is set against the background of Afghanistan's recent turbulent history and is the tale of two young boys and their fragile childhood friendship in Kabul.

**Macauley, Wayne, *Blueprints for a Barbed-Wire Canoe* (PF, Black Pepper Press, 2004) (A)**

City planners create an unusual new housing development in the countryside north of Melbourne. The 'Outer Suburban Village Development Complex' is supposed to be a brave new type of town organised around a central square, with residents enticed by cheap housing and the promise of a fast freeway to the city. Its circular layout is mischievously suggestive of Milton Keynes or Canberra. The promised freeway never eventuates, the town dies, and eventually only a few obstinate residents remain. The interest begins when officials attempt to erase this failed urban dream and the residents bunker down against the outside world.

**O'Brien, Tim, *In the Lake of the Woods* (PF, HarperCollins, 1995)**

Set in northern Minnesota, during the week immediately following the first electoral loss for a formerly successful politician, O'Brien's novel explores, among other issues, the 'win at all costs' mentality of political campaigns, the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, and the cost to human relationships (including marriages) as well as the compromise of personal integrity. The plot is driven, in part, by the mysterious disappearance of the politician's wife.

**Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (PF Penguin Classics, 2000)**

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston lives in a totalitarian society led by Big Brother. His behaviour is censored as are his thoughts. Winston, and his clandestine lover Julia, attempt to rebel against the regime only to realise its complete power and their own powerlessness. Published in 1948, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is George Orwell's bleak vision of how the power of the state could come to dominate the lives of individuals. Winston's individual personality cannot withstand Big Brother's cultural conditioning and torturous tactics. Winston ultimately accepts his powerlessness and declares his love for Big Brother. Orwell's chilling warnings about authoritarian regimes and an individual's political vulnerability resonate today.

**Tyler, Anne, *The Accidental Tourist* (PF, Vintage, 1995)**

As in many of her works, *The Accidental Tourist* focuses on the complexities of family relationships. In this novel, middle-aged travel writer Macon Leary finds himself alone and miserable after his son is murdered and his wife leaves him. As a result, he realises that he is in danger of becoming 'a dried up kernel of a man that nothing really penetrates'. During the course of the novel, however, Macon confronts his suffering and carves out a new life for himself with the help of an energetic and eccentric young woman and her son.

## Short stories

**Winton, Tim, *Minimum of Two* (PF, Penguin Books, 1997) (A)**

This well known collection of stories from the West Australian writer addresses a number of themes (adolescence and death, swimming/drowning, friendship), but, for the most part, examines the way in which characters work to come to grips with past experiences which have often been left unresolved. Indeed, the ritual act of exorcising the past is repeated, and usually it is the male characters who find this most difficult. This on-going concern is very much the subject of the Jerra Neilson stories, which are threaded through the collection as a kind of discontinuous narrative, showing the young man's changing perspective as he struggles toward maturity.

This accessible collection provides students with a wonderful introduction to this esteemed Australian writer.

**Wolff, Tobias, *The Stories of Tobias Wolff* (PF, Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997)**

Tobias Wolff, widely regarded as one of America's finest writers of short stories, displays an acute eye for the details of modern life as he explores the moral dilemmas his very ordinary and believable characters confront.

Ranging widely in setting and theme, Wolff's collection reveals a subtle mastery of tone. His gift for recreating his characters' ways of speaking and thinking render his stories exemplars of the kind of realism associated with Richard Ford and Raymond Carver. Wolff's quirky and at times mordant humour, coupled with a darker vision in which his frequently misguided and muddled characters stumble through life, make his voice distinctive and compelling.

## Plays

**Bolt, Robert, *A Man for all Seasons* (Heinemann Publishing, 1970)**

Henry VIII broke with Rome and established the Church of England because the Pope would not give him a divorce. Sir Thomas More, a great lawyer, was one of the few men who refused to agree to the King's action, choosing to act in accordance with his conscience, rather than from self-interest. More, who has no wish to be a martyr, has to contend with the attempts of his friends, his enemies and his family to persuade him to act pragmatically. More ultimately faces death because he is unable to lie under oath. The play explores psychological and political issues which are still relevant today.

**Miller, Arthur, *A View from the Bridge* (Penguin Books, 2000)**

In constructing his play, Miller has borrowed from Greek tragic form and style: jealousy, betrayal and love complicate the life of an ordinary man, Eddie Carbone, and lead to his inevitable corruption and downfall. Eddie confronts a personal domestic dilemma when he cannot control his affection for his niece, Catherine. Tensions emerge when two relatives, Rodolpho and Marco, are housed by the Carbones after illegally immigrating to fulfil their 'American Dream'. Catherine falls in love with Rodolpho, prompting Eddie to fight for Catherine's affection. When Eddie cannot stop Catherine from asserting her independence and marrying, Eddie betrays the immigrants to government agencies.

Miller's accessible and intensely dramatic text explores notions of justice, identity and honour in the context of an immigration dilemma that has contemporary relevance.

**Rayson, Hannie, *Inheritance* (Currency Press, 2003) (A)**

At the core of Hannie Rayson's play are some vexed questions. Both in real and moral terms, she asks whose land is it: those who own it in law, either legal or spiritual, or those who work it? Taking the story of two related clans, the Hamilton and the Delaney, over five generations, and the Indigenous 'illegitimate' son of one of the family patriarchs, Rayson mixes mythic narratives with contemporary political and family discourses to tell a story of Australia.

**Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet* (Signet, 1998)**

Shakespeare's revenge tragedy deals with a young man's grappling with timeless questions about the nature of life and death. The play discloses a rich double life – on the page and on the stage – and provides the opportunity for rigorous study and individual interpretation.

**Poetry**

**Kelly, Paul, *Don't Start Me Talking: Lyrics 1984–2004* (Allen & Unwin, 2004) (A)**

One of Australia's best loved songwriters and performers and also one of the most prolific, this collection gathers together all of Kelly's lyrics and poems written between 1984 and 2004. Kelly's greatest gift as a songwriter is his honesty. The lyrics include low key love songs with a message and always with an edge, as well as lyrics dealing with the minutiae of the lives of everyday Australians.

**Plath, Sylvia, *Selected Poems* (Faber and Faber, 1985)**

When Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* was published posthumously, Alvarez in the *Observer* wrote: 'If the poems are despairing, vengeful and destructive, they are at the same time tender, open to things, and also unusually clever, sardonic, hard minded. They are works of great artistic purity and, despite all the nihilism, great generosity ... the book is a major literary event'. This selection from her work shows that Sylvia Plath is clearly a major poet of the twentieth century.

**Non-print texts**

***Citizen Kane* (Film)**

Written, directed and starring Orson Welles, this 1941 film is generally regarded as one of the classics of twentieth century cinema. It used film techniques in an innovative way to tell the story of Charles Foster Kane in his journey from newspaper journalist to media tycoon, famous capitalist and politician. The film, which has many parallels with newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst, is the story of a reporter who decided that Kane's dying words would explain his life. Through the use of flashbacks, his research takes him to five different people who each give their own version of Kane's life. It is only the audience who discovers the truth about Kane, about his personal despair, his motivations and his image of himself. (Rating: PG)

**'Fine Line', Episodes 1, 2, & 5 (Television series shown on SBS Television during 2004, distributed by Marcom Projects) (A)**

This series (shown on SBS Television during 2004) reveals the issues confronting some of Australia's best known journalists – the anguished ethical judgments they make, the power they

wield and the fine line they walk between privacy, decency and the public right to know.

***Lantana* (Film) (A)**

This Ray Lawrence film, released in 2001, explores the intertwined relationships of flawed characters against the backdrop of a murder investigation. Part thriller and part exposé, the relationships tangle and weave like the lantana, a plant that produces a beautiful flower yet has sharp, thorny vines that choke the natural bushland. Dark and haunting, bleak and mysterious, the film showcases characters who must endure a search for their own identity before they can come to terms with their relationships. Grief, betrayal, trust and forgiveness are fundamental issues as the film moves to its resolution. (Rating: M)

***Look Both Ways* (Film) (A)**

This film explores the effect of traumatic incidents on peoples' lives. The two main characters are a woman who witnesses the death of a man hit by a freight train and the photographer who attends the accident. Both characters had experienced tragedies in their lives that they were struggling to deal with. Their relationship blossoms in the context of the train accident which is set against a larger, more newsworthy disaster. The film, which has an uplifting conclusion, raises many questions about why these things happen, can they be avoided and if tragedy does happen, is it sometimes meant to be? The film is characterised the use of montage and animated sequences. (Rating: M)

***Voices & Visions from India* (CD-ROM) (Published by Curriculum Corporation in association with the Asia Education Foundation, 2003)(A)**

This CD-ROM contains a range of materials across different media, all representing the voices of people as well as the culture of India. It introduces students to both contemporary and traditional texts in the following media: literature, popular publishing, film and television, and visual and performing arts. The material is organised under a number of themes or categories.

**Non-fiction texts**

**Gaita, Raimond, *Romulus, My Father* (Text Publishing, 2002) (A)**

Romulus Gaita fled his home in Yugoslavia at the age of 13 and came to Australia with his young wife Christine and their four-year-old son soon after the end of World War II. Tragic events were to overtake them, events which Raimond Gaita explores in his story about growing up with his increasingly troubled father in rural Victoria. This is the story of how a compassionate and honest man taught his son the meaning of living a decent life. It deals with friendship and betrayal, with the fragility of existence, with the cruelty of depression and mental illness and the dignity of work. It is about survival and the struggle to establish a sense of self and integrity of character despite, or because of, the obstacles that fate may provide.

**Levi, Primo, *If this is a Man* (Abacus, 2002)**

In this searing account of his experience of the holocaust, Primo Levi, an Italian Jew, records the ordeal of being captured by the Nazis in 1943 and interned at Auschwitz, the horrific death camp. A distinguished chemist, Levi recounts with almost clinical precision the daily routines and procedures of the camp, the imposition of power and the response of

the prisoners. The monstrosity of Hitler's 'Final Solution' is revealed through the 'funereal science of the numbers of Auschwitz, which epitomise the stages of destruction of European Judaism'.

**Pax, Salam, *The Baghdad Blog* (Text Publishing, 2004)**

Salam Pax is 'the Baghdad blogger', a 30-year-old Iraqi living in Baghdad, who maintained an internet diary (a 'blog', short for web log) during the build-up, prosecution and aftermath of the war in Iraq. This text is a print version of his diary entries. It is a unique account of the final days of the Saddam Hussein regime. As the countdown to war continued, millions of people around the world followed this diary, describing ordinary life in a society gripped with fear and spiralling into chaos.

**Xinran, *Sky Burial* (Chatto and Windus, 2004)**

In March 1958, a Chinese woman learns that her husband, an idealistic army doctor, has died while serving in Tibet. Determined to know what has happened to him, she sets off courageously to join his regiment. To her horror, instead of finding a Tibetan people welcoming their Chinese 'liberators', she walks into a bloody conflict. Before she can know her husband's fate, she is taken hostage and embarks on a life-changing journey through the Tibetan countryside – a journey that will last 20 years and lead her to a deep appreciation of Tibetan culture.

## Notes



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