

VCE English and English as an Additional Language (EAL) Text List 2018

The following texts proposed by the English and EAL Text Advisory Panel have been approved by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) as suitable for study in Units 3 and 4 in 2018. Texts were selected in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines.

Criteria for text selection

Each text selected for the VCE English and EAL text list will:

- have literary merit
- be an excellent example of form and genre
- sustain intensive study, raising interesting issues and providing challenging ideas
- reflect current community standards and expectations in the context of senior secondary study of texts.

The text list as a whole will:

- be suitable for a diverse student cohort from a range of backgrounds and contexts, including students studying English as an additional language
- reflect the cultural diversity of the Victorian community
- include texts by Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- include a balance of new and established works*, including a Shakespearean text
- include texts that display affirming perspectives
- reflect engagement with global perspectives.

*Established works include texts that are recognised as having enduring artistic value.

Guidelines for text selection

The text list for VCE English and EAL must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The text list must contain a total of 36 texts:
 - 20 for List 1: Reading and creating texts
 - 16 for List 2: Reading and comparing texts (eight pairs).
- List 1 must represent a range of texts in the following approximate proportions:
 - eight novels
 - two collections of short stories
 - two collections of poetry or songs
 - three plays
 - three multimodal texts**
 - two non-fiction texts.

**Multimodal texts are defined as combining two or more communication modes, for example, print, image and spoken text, as in films or graphic novels.

- List 2 must include eight pairs that:
 - are connected by themes, issues and ideas
 - represent a range of texts, such as novels, short stories, poetry, plays, multimodal (including film) and non-fiction
 - include a range of combinations of texts, such as a novel and a film or a non-fiction text and a play.

For **VCE EAL students only**, one text in each pair will be nominated for achievement of Unit 3 Outcome 1: Reading and creating texts.

- The text list must also contain:
 - at least five texts for List 1 and four texts for List 2 by Australian authors
 - print and multimodal texts that are widely available
 - titles that are different from those on the VCE Literature text list.
- The text list must be reviewed annually, with approximately 25 per cent of the texts being changed. No text will appear for more than four consecutive years or fewer than two years. Note that List 2 will have no changes in the second year of implementation, that is, 2018. Pairs of texts on List 2 will be reviewed and rotations will begin in the third year of implementation, that is, 2019.
- Texts will be accompanied by full bibliographic details where necessary.

Information for schools

Teachers must consider the text list in conjunction with the relevant text selection information published on page 17 of the *VCE English and English as an Additional Language Study Design 2017–2020* for Units 3 and 4.

VCE English students

A total of four texts across the Units 3 and 4 sequence must be selected from the text list published annually by the VCAA.

For Unit 3 Area of Study 1, students must read and study two selected texts from List 1.

For Unit 4 Area of Study 1, students must read and study one pair of texts (that is, two texts) from List 2.

At least two set texts must be selected from the following categories: novels, plays, collections of short stories, collections of poetry.

VCE EAL students

A total of three texts across the Units 3 and 4 sequence must be selected from the text list published annually by the VCAA.

VCE EAL students must read and study one selected text from List 1 and a pair of texts (that is, two texts) from List 2.

Two texts must be used for Unit 3 Area of Study 1 – one selected from List 1 and one of the pair selected from List 2.

The pair of texts from List 2 should be used for Unit 4 Area of Study 1.

In either Unit 3 or 4, at least one set text must be a written text in one of the following forms: a novel, a play, a collection of short stories or a collection of poetry.

All students

No more than one of the selected texts may be a multimodal text, for example, a film or graphic novel. A multimodal text may be selected from either List 1 or List 2, but not from both. Other multimodal texts may be used to support the study of selected texts.

At least one of the selected texts must be by an Australian, as indicated on the text list.

The annotations in this document are provided to assist teachers with selection of texts in accordance with the requirements in the *VCE English and English as an Additional Language Study Design*; they do not constitute advice about the teaching, learning or assessment of texts.

When selecting texts that do not come from the multimodal category, 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.

While the VCAA considers all the texts on the text 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 in this document 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 text list.

Key to codes

List 1 is presented alphabetically by author according to text type. List 2 is presented in pairs, with the nominated EAL text in the first column.

Abbreviations in brackets after the titles signify the following:

(A) This text meets the Australian requirement.

(#) Bracketed numbers indicate the number of years that a text has appeared on the VCE English and EAL text list; (1) for example, indicates that 2018 is the first year that a text has appeared on the text list.

(EAL) This indicates that, for **VCE EAL students only**, the text is nominated for achievement of Unit 3 Outcome 1: Reading and creating texts.

List 1

Novels

- Adiga, Aravind, *The White Tiger* (4)
Grenville, Kate, *The Lieutenant* (A) (2)
Kent, Hannah, *Burial Rites* (A) (4)
Le Guin, Ursula, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (2)
London, Joan, *The Golden Age* (A) (2)
Piper, Christine, *After Darkness* (A) (1)
Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein* (3)
Witting, Amy, *I for Isobel* (A) (4)

Short stories

Kennedy, Cate, *Like a House on Fire* (A) (1)

Stories for study: 'Flexion', 'Ashes', 'Laminex and Mirrors', 'Tender', 'Like a House on Fire', 'Five-Dollar Family', 'Cross-country', 'Sleepers', 'Whirlpool', 'Cake', 'White Spirit', 'Little Plastic Shipwreck', 'Waiting', 'Static', 'Seventy-Two Derwents'.

MacLeod, Alistair, *Island: Collected Stories* (3)

Stories for study: 'The Boat', 'The Vastness of the Dark', 'The Golden Gift of Grey', 'The Return', 'The Lost Salt Gift of Blood', 'The Road to Rankin's Point', 'The Closing Down of Summer', 'To Every Thing There Is a Season', 'Second Spring', 'Winter Dog', 'The Tuning of Perfection', 'Vision', 'Island'.

Plays

- Euripides, 'Medea', in *Medea and Other Plays* (4)
Rayson, Hannie, *Extinction* (A) (1)
Shakespeare, William, *Measure for Measure* (3)

Poetry/Songs

- Donne, John, *Selected Poems* (3)
Skrzynecki, Peter, *Old/New World: New & Selected Poems* (A) (2)

Multimodal texts

Films

Hitchcock, Alfred (director), *Rear Window* (1)

Polley, Sarah (director), *Stories We Tell* (1)

Other

Satrapi, Marjane, *Persepolis*, Jonathan Cape (1)

Non-fiction texts

Boo, Katherine, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* (2)

Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood* (1)

List 2

For **VCE EAL students only**, one text in each pair is nominated for achievement of Unit 3 Outcome 1: Reading and creating texts. This text is indicated by (EAL).

Pair 1

Non-fiction text

Davidson, Robyn, *Tracks* (A) (2) (EAL)

Multimodal text – Film

Penn, Sean (director), *Into the Wild* (2)

Pair 2

Multimodal text – Film

Eastwood, Clint (director), *Invictus* (2) (EAL)

Novel

Malouf, David, *Ransom* (A) (2)

Pair 3

Non-fiction text

Funder, Anna, *Stasiland* (A) (2) (EAL)

Novel

Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (2)

Pair 4

Non-fiction text

MacCarter, Kent and Lemer, Ali (eds), *Joyful Strains: Making Australia Home* (A) (2) (EAL)

Novel

Lahiri, Jhumpa, *The Namesake* (2)

Pair 5

Play

Miller, Arthur, *The Crucible* (2) (EAL)

Novel

Brooks, Geraldine, *Year of Wonders: A Novel of the Plague* (A) (2)

Pair 6

Play

Murray-Smith, Joanna, *Bombshells* (A) (2) (EAL)

Novel

Atwood, Margaret, *The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus* (2)

Pair 7

Play

Wright, Tom, *Black Diggers* (A) (2) (EAL)

Novel

D'Aguiar, Fred, *The Longest Memory* (2)

Pair 8

Non-fiction text

Yousafzai, Malala, with Lamb, Christina, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* (2) (EAL)

Multimodal text – Film

Cole, Nigel (director), *Made in Dagenham* (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.

List 1 is presented alphabetically by author according to text type. Films are listed by title. List 2 is presented in pairs, with the nominated EAL text presented first.

List 1

Novels

Adiga, Aravind, *The White Tiger*, Atlantic Books, 2008 (4)

Set in modern-day India, *The White Tiger* follows Balram Halwai from his early life of rural poverty to his eventual success as an entrepreneur and wealthy urbanite. Narrated as a series of letters to the former Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao, the novel charts Balram's journey out of the slums populated by the poor and lower castes, and celebrates his eventual triumph as he breaks free from a life of servitude and obeisance. The novel explores the divisions between the rich and the poor, and considers how social structures operate to reinforce class hierarchy. It realistically depicts the misery and hardship experienced by India's underclass, confronting readers with the lack of value placed upon human life. Adiga's darkly comic novel also raises questions about the reliability and integrity of the narrator, and asks whether success is ever possible without compromise.

Grenville, Kate, *The Lieutenant*, The Text Publishing Company, 2010 (A) (2)

Grenville's work of historical fiction depicts the journey of young Marine Lieutenant Daniel Rooke and how he navigates his troubled childhood in 18th-century Portsmouth, his life in Australia and, finally, in Antigua. A gifted mathematician and astronomer, Rooke is sent to Australia's first settlement, where he becomes obsessed with learning and recording in writing the language of the Cardigal people. Rooke's attachment to his 'tutors', particularly Tagaran, tests his loyalties, making him choose between old and new-found friends, and patriotic obligations and conscience, leaving him emotionally alienated and, ultimately, physically isolated. Grenville's novel examines the themes of knowledge, ambition, friendship, difference and isolation, and the role of language.

Kent, Hannah, *Burial Rites*, Picador, 2013 (A) (4)

Burial Rites is a reimagining of the events leading up to the last public execution in Iceland, the beheading of Agnes Magnúsdóttir. The narrative opens in 1829, when the condemned woman is transferred to the isolated home of Jón Jónsson's family to undergo spiritual counselling with the young assistant reverend, Tóti, and await her execution. Kent captures the domineering, unforgiving nature of the landscape of northern Iceland and its influence over the characters' lives. As the story of Agnes's early life and the circumstances surrounding her crime become apparent, preconceived notions of innocence and guilt are challenged, and powerful relationships are formed. The text's richness is achieved through the use of flashbacks, multiple narrators and excerpts from archival material. The various perspectives humanise the protagonist and highlight the unreliable nature of stories. With accessible language and a compelling plot, this text has the capacity to transport the reader to another time and place.

Le Guin, Ursula, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Orbit, 1992 (2)

In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin uses the science fiction genre to explore what a society without men or women, where all humans share the features of both genders, could be like. Set on the planet Gethen, the story begins with Genly Ai, an envoy from an intergalactic coalition, negotiating with the leaders of Karhide, a country on Gethen. Ai becomes a pawn in national and global politics, and a thrilling tale of political intrigue unfolds. A complex narrative told through multiple voices and archival documents, *The Left Hand of Darkness* confronts many assumptions about what it is to be human for both Ai and the inhabitants of Gethen.

London, Joan, *The Golden Age*, Vintage, 2014 (A) (2)

The Golden Age tells the story of Frank Gold, a 13-year-old refugee recovering at The Golden Age Children's Polio Convalescent Home. Frank, or Ferenc, is learning to walk again but is also dealing with his memories of his time in war-torn Hungary. He forms a close relationship with Elsa, a fellow patient, who inspires his poetry. Set in 1950s Perth, the novel explores grand themes such as the refugee experience, love, memory, fear and isolation through the microcosm of The Golden Age. This is a surprisingly uplifting telling of a sad and moving story.

Piper, Christine, *After Darkness*, Allen & Unwin, 2014 (A) (1)

Christine Piper is a distinguished, prize-winning writer and her first novel, *After Darkness*, won the 2014 Vogel's Literary Award. She also won the 2014 Calibre Essay Prize and was the 2013 Alice Hayes writing fellow at Ragdale in the United States. *After Darkness* is written in the first person. Ibaraki Tomokazu, a Japanese doctor who is interned in Australia in 1942, tells the story of his life in Japan and Australia. The novel opens in South Australia in 1942. Ibaraki then reveals his story by exploring his life in Tokyo and in Broome before the war.

The text deals with a number of timeless ideas, including friendship, identity, trauma, loss and change. Possibly the most significant is the issue of personal conscience – the conflict every individual faces when confronted with the differences between what they really believe is right and what is held to be right by tradition or society.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein*, Penguin Classics, 2003 (3)

On a bleak November night, the scientist Victor Frankenstein assembles in his laboratory the instruments he needs to animate the lifeless body at his feet. When his experiment works, he unleashes 'the monster' that begins to haunt him. Frankenstein is terrified of his creation and its acts, but 'the monster' may turn out to be more human than its creator. Mary Shelley's Gothic novel explores the contradictions in a flawed humanity and is as startling today as it was upon its publication in 1818.

Witting, Amy, *I for Isobel*, The Text Publishing Company, 2014 (A) (4)

Amy Witting's *I for Isobel* is a rite-of-passage novel, a 'portrait of the artist as a young woman'. Isobel's quest for independence and an identity separate from her overbearing mother is marked by her intelligence, her anxiety and her sense of the absurd. The story is structured in a series of five self-contained episodes, each with Isobel's insights or epiphanies as she moves from her working-class Sydney home to a Catholic school, then a boarding house, and encounters university students and the world of work. Her 'getting of wisdom', taking her from the entrapment of family into transcendent awareness of her identity as a writer in the 'word factory', is told with compassion, mordant humour and powerful, dramatic realism.

Short stories

Kennedy, Cate, *Like a House on Fire*, Scribe, 2013 (A) (1)

Stories for study: 'Flexion', 'Ashes', 'Laminex and Mirrors', 'Tender', 'Like a House on Fire', 'Five-Dollar Family', 'Cross-country', 'Sleepers', 'Whirlpool', 'Cake', 'White Spirit', 'Little Plastic Shipwreck', 'Waiting', 'Static', 'Seventy-Two Derwents'.

Victorian based author Cate Kennedy was shortlisted for The Stella Prize in 2013 for her most recent collection of short fiction, *Like a House on Fire*. This collection has been recognised for its ability to capture the subtleties of the 'real' people of modern Australia. While often dark and challenging, many of the stories highlight moments of hope in the complex lives of everyday individuals and their families.

The home and its role in creating strong family bonds are at the core of Kennedy's stories. The cliché of the house on fire within the title is subverted, as for many it provides an environment of physical and emotional danger instead of a sanctuary from the outside world. Themes of regret, understanding, awareness, the complexity of filial and romantic relationships, the impact of chronic injury and sickness, as well as salvation underpin this collection of stories. Students will find writing that offers a great deal of discussion about issues faced in 21st century society.

Schools may need to deal with some complex and potentially controversial topics and effectively prepare students for mature themes.

MacLeod, Alistair, *Island: Collected Stories*, Vintage, 2002 (3)

Stories for study: 'The Boat', 'The Vastness of the Dark', 'The Golden Gift of Grey', 'The Return', 'The Lost Salt Gift of Blood', 'The Road to Rankin's Point', 'The Closing Down of Summer', 'To Every Thing There Is a Season', 'Second Spring', 'Winter Dog', 'The Tuning of Perfection', 'Vision', 'Island'

MacLeod's collection of short stories includes tales of individuals, families and small communities in his characteristic spare, evocative prose. MacLeod's preoccupations are family relationships and memory; grandparents, parents, husbands, wives and their children come to terms with the past as they face an uncertain future. The reader sees a community in a period of modernisation and change, and is invited to question what is gained and what is lost. Most of the stories are set in Canada's remote eastern provinces; the wild beauty of the land and sea provides a stark background to the human drama within each of the stories.

Plays

Euripides, 'Medea', in *Medea and Other Plays*, John Davie (trans.), Penguin Classics, 2003 (4)

Euripides explores the psyche of the wronged woman in this famous ancient Greek tragedy. The eponymous Medea discovers that her husband, Jason, has married the daughter of King Creon, abandoning his barbarian wife and two sons. Jason promises to reunite them under one household, with Medea as his mistress, but Medea is not placated. The other characters fear what Medea might do and try to thwart her but, ultimately, Medea's grief is so strong that revenge is inevitable.

Medea's sense of powerlessness against unfolding events, which are controlled by men, leads her to seek vengeance in a most hideous way, betraying even her love for her own children. As the play builds to its horrifying climax, the behaviour of the characters causes the audience to re-evaluate its sympathies and to question whether retribution can ever be justified.

Rayson, Hannie, *Extinction*, australianplays.org, 2013 (A) (1)

Award winning Australian playwright Hannie Rayson's most recent work, *Extinction* is a moving and sometimes confronting exploration of human fragility. When Harry Jewell runs over an endangered tiger quoll during a stormy night in the Otways, the event precipitates a moral crisis for the mining executive. Through his new-found relationship with conservation biologist Dr Piper Ross, Jewell is forced to re-evaluate the consequences of prioritising economic over environmental concerns, while Ross herself is confronted by a conflict: should she act for the greater good, or for the good of herself?

Hannie Rayson explores human relationships, environmental issues and considerations of mortality through her depiction of a range of complex and flawed characters. Rayson's symbolism invites students to discuss humanity's obligations to nature, as well as the interplay between idealism and pragmatism.

Shakespeare, William, *Measure for Measure*, Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (eds), Macmillan, 2010 (3)

Measure for Measure explores diverse themes of power, love, immorality and morality, corruption, punishment and forgiveness. The play is set in Vienna, where the ruler, Duke Vincentio, has temporarily abdicated his power and authority to his deputy, Angelo. Angelo's duty is to reinforce the old Christian laws that have lapsed, in order to rid the city of moral decay. *Measure for Measure* blends elements of darkness with comedy and is often called a tragicomedy. Shakespeare sets up conflicts between the thematic elements of strict moralistic expectations and narrow interpretations of justice, clashing with individuals and their choices and freedom. The audience is prompted to consider the nature of justice and the fallibility of individuals in power.

Poetry/Songs

Donne, John, *Selected Poems*, Penguin Classics, 2006 (3)

Donne's poetry is distinguished by its sharp wit, profundity of thought, eloquence and nuance. He is considered by many to be one of the greatest writers of 'metaphysical' poetry, in which passion is interwoven with reasoning. Donne's works include, but are not limited to, sonnets, love poems satires, sermons and songs. Known for its emotional intensity and terse syntax, Donne's poetry draws on imagery from fields such as alchemy, astronomy and politics.

Skrzynecki, Peter, *Old/New World: New & Selected Poems*, University of Queensland Press, 2007 (A) (2)

Peter Skrzynecki is the German-born son of Polish parents who immigrated to Australia in 1949. He writes of their efforts to adapt to the new country while maintaining the traditions of their homeland. Written largely in free verse, his poems deal with family relationships, in his case both as a son and as a parent, and the importance of memory and friendship. Skrzynecki's poems are lyrical and appreciative as he describes both the Australian landscape and the experience of life in suburbia. Skrzynecki's relationships with fellow Australian writers and artists are also reflected in his poetry.

Multimodal texts

Films

Hitchcock, Alfred (director), *Rear Window*, 1954 (1)

When professional adventure photographer L. B. 'Jeff' Jeffries breaks his leg on assignment, he is confined to a wheelchair to recuperate in his New York apartment. Frustrated and bored in the summer heat, he begins watching his neighbours across the courtyard. Boredom turns to suspicion when he believes that one of his neighbours has been murdered. Calling on the support of his socialite girlfriend, Lisa Fremont, and his visiting nurse, Stella, Jeff embarks on an investigation into the actions of that fateful night and turns up more than he expected.

Nominated for four Academy Awards and long regarded as one of the best films of the 20th century, *Rear Window* is a masterpiece of storytelling from the master of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock. Filmed almost exclusively from Jeff's perspective, this mystery thriller explores the various 'ways of looking' as the audience shares the journey with the three protagonists. Beautifully crafted, it is a film that stands up to repeat viewings and close analysis.

Polley, Sarah (director), *Stories We Tell*, 2012 (1)

Stories We Tell is actor Sarah Polley's second film as director. The film won numerous documentary awards, including Best Documentary Screenplay from the Writers Guild of America.

Stories We Tell is an autobiographical documentary: Polley compiles interviews with many of her family members, narration from her father, and home video footage to create a chorus of voices as a means of investigating her family's past. The film is an interrogation of history, and examines how stories can guide our memories, and whether one voice has a right to declare itself the truth. The layering of different documentary techniques allows students to investigate the role stories play in our lives, as well the conflicts around the truth of family secrets.

Other

Satrapi, Marjane, *Persepolis*, Jonathan Cape, 2003 (1)

Iranian-born Marjane Satrapi documents her childhood in Tehran, Iran, from age six to 14 in the graphic novel *Persepolis*. The book was met with critical acclaim, receiving several awards and being adapted into an animated film in 2007.

Growing up during the period of the Islamic revolution, Satrapi suffered under oppression and was exposed to violence and brutality. She does not shy away from exploring the often shocking and fatal repercussions of the repressive regime. However, *Persepolis* also offers countenance to this brutality by highlighting the courageous actions of Satrapi's family, including her staunch Marxist parents and her activist uncle, Anoosh, who she idolises. *Persepolis* explores the contradictions between public and private life, and how absurd they appear through the eyes of an innocent child. The graphic novel form provides much for students to discuss regarding the written and the visual, both of which can be considered when analysing the themes of grief, mortality, freedom and repression, and heroism and gender.

Non-fiction texts

Boo, Katherine, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, Scribe, 2013 (2)

Set in a Mumbai slum, this narrative non-fiction book documents how those in poverty – particularly women and children – negotiate the age of globalisation. After several years of field work, Boo explores the profound inequality in the lives of the slum-dwellers, interrogating the degree to which society's most exposed people can control their reality. Posing uncomfortable questions about the inconsistent nature of justice and opportunity, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* reveals the conditions that sabotage humanity's 'innate capacity for moral action' amid 'government corruption and indifference'.

Boo's confronting work contains unsettling scenes of violent death, mistreatment of women, racism and broken dreams, but these issues are presented as inevitable in the society and are not exploited. The voices of the people are quoted.

The text observes what happens when versions of reality clash, and examines the role of perception, power and self-preservation in pulling people back from the vulnerable brink upon which they totter. There are moments of hope and defiance of the forces against which the people struggle.

Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood*, Penguin, 1965 (1)

A blend of factual reportage and narrative techniques, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* has been described as one of the great books of American 20th-century literature. Capote travelled from New York to Holcomb, a small mid-western town, to explore the impact of this brutal and apparently random act of violence on the community. What followed was five years of research; information gleaned through reports and interviews with various members of the Holcomb community, local law enforcement and the killers themselves, Perry Edward Smith and Richard Eugene Hickock.

Finding himself particularly drawn to Smith's own tragic life story, Capote examines the American Dream, as represented by the Clutters, and sharply reminds us of its broader unattainability. Both critically and commercially acclaimed, Capote ultimately questions the 'right to kill' and within this framework he explores not simply the Clutter murders, but the hypocrisy of the State whose Death Penalty 'kills' criminals in its pursuit of justice for the 'people'. In this sense, the stories within reveal the sadness of death, rather than just the causes and consequences of murder, a crime which, 'all told, ended six human lives'.

List 2

Pair 1

Davidson, Robyn, *Tracks*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013 (A) (2) (EAL)

Robyn Davidson's 2700-kilometre trek from Alice Springs to the Indian Ocean in 1977 with camels became famous due to a *National Geographic* article focused on the journey of a heroine driven to achieve a personal goal, despite the patronising disbelief of those around her. Davidson's 1980 memoir highlights an adventurer with a great affinity for the environment, empathy for Australia's Indigenous people and a determination to achieve, despite setbacks. Told with brutal honesty, this story of the internal and external battle against the sandhills, spinifex and interminable space presents the reader with an intriguing study of a woman who tests herself in the isolation of the wilderness.

***Into the Wild*, Director: Sean Penn, 2007 (2)**

In 1992, the body of Christopher McCandless was found in an abandoned bus in a national park in Alaska. *Into the Wild* reconstructs the events of the two years leading up to the death of McCandless. Risk taker and idealist or dropout and loner, college graduate McCandless donates his entire life's savings to charity and rejects conformity and materialism. He embarks on a search for adventure, a quest to find himself. Set against the backdrop of contrasting American landscapes, writer and director Sean Penn explores the journey of an individual through the edges of society, into isolation and eventually to the realisation that happiness is truly found with friends and family. (Rating: M)

Pair 2

***Invictus*, Director: Clint Eastwood, 2009 (2) (EAL)**

As the newly elected president of South Africa after the fall of apartheid, Nelson Mandela faces the challenge of leading a racially and economically divided country. He believes he can unite his country through the universal language of sport. *Invictus* is about how Mandela joins forces with Francois Pienaar, captain of the national rugby team, to rally South Africans behind a bid to win the 1995 Rugby World Cup. The title, *Invictus*, means 'undefeated' or 'unconquered' in Latin. It is also the title of a poem by William Ernest Henley about the will to survive in the face of a severe test. (Rating: PG)

Malouf, David, *Ransom*, Vintage, 2010 (A) (2)

Malouf re-imagines the world of *The Iliad* through a little-known episode of the Trojan War. 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's camp seeking to ransom his son's body. He travels in a donkey cart escorted only by a carter but aided by the god Hermes. The mission is a success and delivers to Priam enrichment in life and legendary status after death. *Ransom* reveals the powerful impact of love, leadership and paternal duty, and explores ideas of universal relevance, including the liberation of the spirit and what can be achieved through a vision of something new.

Pair 3

Funder, Anna, *Stasiland*, The Text Publishing Company, 2014 (A) (2) (EAL)

An investigation into the rule of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the role of the secret police, the Stasi, *Stasiland* considers the human cost of state control. Revealing episodes of recent history previously hidden behind the Berlin Wall, Australian writer Anna Funder presents stories of survival with compassion and humour. Funder recounts the personal stories of Stasi victims, from citizens to some Stasi officers themselves. The text illustrates not only the toll of such an oppressive regime at the time, but also considers the ongoing legacy of the Stasi long after the fall of the GDR.

Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin Books, 2013 (2)

George Orwell's chilling vision of the future explores the consequences of totalitarian rule for the individual. Motivated by his love for Julia, protagonist Winston Smith engages in increasingly dangerous acts of dissent, despite the ever-present gaze of Big Brother. As Winston learns more about the way in which the Party exercises control, the futility of his rebellion becomes apparent and he is ultimately forced to conform and admit his love for Big Brother. Orwell's text explores the way in which conformity facilitates social control and considers how loyalty can be compromised by the desire for self-preservation.

Pair 4

MacCarter, Kent and Lemer, Ali (eds), *Joyful Strains: Making Australia Home*, Affirm Press, 2013 (A) (2) (EAL)

Joyful Strains is a collection of 27 short memoirs from writers of diverse ethnic backgrounds who reflect on their experiences of migration to Australia. Despite the range of experiences represented, there are common threads that tie these stories together, such as a longing for the old country and its traditions and food, the importance of family and names, what it takes to feel at home in a new country, and the enormous relief and gratitude for a new-found sense of personal freedom and safety. This anthology shows what it means to tear away from bonds of family and home in order to start over in a new country, a feeling that resonates with so many of us who now call Australia home.

Lahiri, Jhumpa, *The Namesake*, Fourth Estate, 2011 (2)

For as long as he can remember, Gogol Ganguli has hated his name. Growing up in an Indian family in suburban America did not make it any easier for him to accept. So, on his 18th birthday, he changes his awkward moniker by deed poll in the hope of casting it off along with the inherited values it represents. Gogol soon discovers, however, that his identity is bound up in much more than what he is called. No matter how hard he tries, he struggles to reconcile the tension that exists between his Indian heritage and his American values. It is this clash of cultures that is at the heart of this narrative, as well as the ways in which the members of the Ganguli family are shaped by their homeland and changed by the American soil on which they live.

Pair 5

Miller, Arthur, *The Crucible*, Penguin Classics, 2000 (2) (EAL)

Set against the claustrophobic and dangerous times of the Salem witch trials in 1692, *The Crucible* recreates the terrifying reality of a village in New England where a group of young girls, accused of witchcraft, attempt to escape retribution by pointing the finger at others. Of particular fascination is the flawed but ultimately heroic response of the protagonist, John Proctor. His battle with Puritan authorities, jealous neighbours and those bent on personal revenge, suggests that love, integrity and dignity can prevail.

Brooks, Geraldine, *Year of Wonders: A Novel of the Plague*, Fourth Estate, 2002 (A) (2)

Year of Wonders is set against the historical backdrop of the plague year of 1666, which brought fear, confusion and grief to a small village in Derbyshire. A maid, Anna Frith, narrates her story and, in doing so, traces the anguish of her community as they endure the terrors of a deadly infectious disease and self-imposed isolation. The community seeks answers in religion and superstitions as the plague takes its toll physically, mentally and spiritually. The relationships of Anna, the idealistic but driven rector and his troubled wife are central to the unfolding tragedy in the village.

Pair 6

Murray-Smith, Joanna, *Bombshells*, Currency Press & Nick Hern Books, 2014 (A) (2) (EAL)

Written as a series of monologues, *Bombshells* examines the lives of six Western women: a mother, a timid old woman, a starstruck teenager, a widow, a 20-something and an ageing cabaret performer. Challenging conventional stereotypes, the play contrasts accepted social mores with the realities of these women's lives. With a mixture of pathos and humour, Murray-Smith examines the characters' intimate thoughts and feelings, and the ways in which they respond to the 'bombshells' in their lives.

Atwood, Margaret, *The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus*, The Text Publishing Company, 2007 (2)

In Homer's *The Iliad*, Penelope, the wife of Odysseus and cousin to the beautiful Helen of Troy, is celebrated for her wifely devotion and faithfulness. With Odysseus off fighting the Trojan War, Penelope governs his kingdom of Ithaca, raises their son and fends off over 100 suitors. When Odysseus returns, he kills the suitors and hangs Penelope's maids. In this witty and vibrant retelling of Homer's work, Penelope's narrative is interspersed with the choral commentary of the 12 maids. Reminiscent of classical Greek drama structure, *The Penelopiad* uses a variety of writing styles to give voice to the female characters.

Pair 7

Wright, Tom, *Black Diggers*, Playlab, 2015 (A) (2) (EAL)

Black Diggers is composed of a series of short scenes exploring the experiences of Indigenous Australians before, during and after the First World War. The play builds a picture reflecting the real-life experiences of the men who signed up to go to war to fight for Australia at a time when Indigenous Australians were deprived of rights and citizenship in their own country. Based on research into the experiences of many different soldiers, the play explores racism, mateship, sacrifice, courage and the horrors of war.

D'Aguiar, Fred, *The Longest Memory*, Vintage, 1995 (2)

This concise novel explores the story of Whitechapel, the oldest and most respected slave on a plantation in Virginia in the 18th century. Reflecting on his life, Whitechapel remembers his past as a valued slave and advisor to his master, central to the functioning of the plantation. The key event that changed and marred his life is revealed through his reflections as he considers his role in the events leading to the death of his son. The narrative moves between first, second and third person, and between reflection, verse, diary entry and newspaper report. The novel examines the nature of slavery, sacrifice, power and the insidious nature of racism.

Pair 8

Yousafzai, Malala, with Lamb, Christina, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014 (2) (EAL)

In 2012, 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai was shot on her way home from school in retaliation for her refusal to be intimidated by those who believe that girls should not receive an education, leading to greater international recognition for her cause. While the name Malala may now be well known, the story of how she came to be a leading voice in her own country and the strength that helped her to fight on is less known. *I Am Malala* is not just a biographical account of her life, it tells the story of a generation of girls who still have to struggle for equal opportunities, of the love of parents who valued and encouraged their talented daughter when others saw value only in sons, and of a country that is caught between religious extremism and the rights of the individual.

***Made in Dagenham*, Director: Nigel Cole, 2010 (2)**

Set in Dagenham, East London, in 1968, *Made in Dagenham* tells the story of female workers at the Ford plant who take strike action in protest of their poor work conditions and for the right to equal pay. The film depicts a time when women's rights were still hard won and large corporations, such as Ford, held power over governments by threatening to close down factories in response to pay demands. While largely a positive film about determination and the need for confidence in the fight for equality, some confronting issues in the women's lives are included. *Made in Dagenham* not only explores the struggle of women in the workplace, but also depicts attitudes towards the working classes in Britain and the plight of all its blue-collar workers.

(Rating: M)