

VCE English/EAL Text List 2015

The following texts proposed by the English/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 2015. Texts were selected in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines.

Criteria for text selection

Each text selected for the VCE English/EAL text list 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 students studying English as an additional language
- 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 adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Contain a total of 36 available texts
 - a. 20 for List 1: Area of Study 1
 - b. 16 for 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. eight novels
 - ii. two collections of short stories
 - iii. two collections of poetry or songs
 - iv. three plays
 - v. three multimodal texts
 - vi. two 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. one novel
 - ii. one film text
 - Plus two from the following, depending on relevance to the Context:
 - i. plays
 - ii. short stories
 - iii. poetry
 - iv. other literature
- 3. Contain at least five texts for List 1 and four texts for List 2 (one in each Context) by or about Australians
- 4. Contain print and film 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 of VCE 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 2008–2015* 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. Films are multimodal texts.

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

The annotations in this document 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 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 VCE, VCAL and VET* 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 the following.

- (A) This text meets the Australian requirement.
- (#) Bracketed numbers indicate the number of years that a text has appeared on the English/EAL text list: (1) for example, indicates that 2015 is the first year a text has appeared on the list.

List 1

Novels

Adiga, Aravind, *The White Tiger* (1)
Atwood, Margaret, *Cat's Eye* (4)
Brontë, Emily, *Wuthering Heights* (3)
Kent, Hannah, *Burial Rites* (A) (1)
Matar, Hisham, *In The Country of Men* (3)
Tóibín, Colm, *Brooklyn* (3)
Winton, Tim, *Cloudstreet* (A) (2)
Witting, Amy, *I for Isobel* (A) (1)

Short stories

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2)
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'

Carver, Raymond, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (4)
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?'

Plays

Davis, Jack, *No Sugar* (A) (2)
Euripides, 'Medea', in *Medea and Other Plays* (1)
Shakespeare, William, *Henry IV Part I* (4)

Poetry/Songs

Harwood, Gwen, *Selected Poems* (A) (3)
Owen, Wilfred, *The War Poems* (ed. Jon Stallworthy) (4)

Multimodal texts

Films

Mankiewicz, Joseph (director), *All About Eve* (2)
Perkins, Rachel (director), *Mabo* (A) (2)

Other

Spiegelman, Art, *The Complete Maus* (2)

Non-fiction texts

Funder, Anna, *Stasiland* (A) (3)
Wolff, Tobias, *This Boy's Life* (2)

List 2

The imaginative landscape

- Kinsella, John, *Peripheral Light – Selected and New Poems* (A) (4)
Lean, David (director), *A Passage to India* (1)
Munro, Alice, *The View from Castle Rock* (3)
Thornell, Kristel, *Night Street* (A) (2)

Whose reality?

- Coetzee, JM, *Foe* (A) (1)
Leunig, Michael, *The Lot: In words* (A) (4)
Levinson, Barry (director), *Wag the Dog* (2)
Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman* (3)

Encountering conflict

- Brecht, Bertolt, *Life of Galileo* (3)
Farhadi, Asghar (director), *A Separation* (1)
Grenville, Kate, *The Lieutenant* (A) (1)
Stack, Megan, *Every Man in this Village is a Liar* (2)

Exploring issues of identity and belonging

- Fabian, Anthony (director), *Skin* (4)
Lawler, Ray, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (A) (3)
Miller, Patti, *The Mind of a Thief* (A) (2)
Mudrooroo, *Wild Cat Falling* (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

Adiga, Aravind, *The White Tiger*, Atlantic Books, 2008 (1)

Set in modern-day India, *The White Tiger* follows Balam 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 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, the novel charts Balam'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. Adiga's darkly comic novel also raises questions about the reliability and integrity of the narrator, and asks whether success is ever possible without moral compromise.

Atwood, Margaret, *Cat's Eye*, Virago Press, 2009 (4)

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?

Brontë, Emily, *Wuthering Heights*, Penguin Black Classic, 2003 (3)

Brontë'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 in 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.

Kent, Hannah, *Burial Rites*, Picador, 2013 (A) (1)

Burial Rites is a powerful re-imagining 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 effectively 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.

Matar, Hisham, *In the Country of Men*, Penguin, 2006 (3)

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 (3)

In the 1950s, Ellis, an Irish girl from a small town, moves to the United States 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) (2)

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's 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.

Witting, Amy, *I for Isobel*, Text Publishing, 2014 (A) (1)

Amy Witting's *I for Isobel* is a female 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

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Harper Collins (Fourth Estate), 2009 (2)

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.

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

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.

Plays

Davis, Jack, *No Sugar*, Currency Press, 2012 (A) (2)

Spanning five years during the Depression, Jack Davis's social drama explores Australia's apartheid past in Western Australia. The Millimurra family battles the racism, brutality and indifference of the white bureaucracy, constabulary and their black tracker brothers. Davis's authentic Indigenous perspective and 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 Millimurras draw their strength from family and their land. This play challenges the audience to reflect on the damage wrought by white 'civilisation'.

Euripides, 'Medea', in *Medea and Other Plays*, John Davie (trans.), Penguin Classics, 2003 (1)

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.

Shakespeare, William, *Henry IV Part I*, Penguin, 2005 (4)

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 I*, 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.

Poetry/Songs

Harwood, Gwen, *Selected Poems*, Penguin, 2001 (A) (3)

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.

Owen, Wilfred, *The War Poems*, Jon Stallworthy (ed.), Chatto & Windus (Random), 1994 (4)

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 frontline 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.'

Multimodal

Films

All About Eve, Director: Joseph Mankiewicz, 1950 (2)

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 ageing 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. (Rating: PG)

Mabo, Director: Rachel Perkins, 2012 (A) (2)

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. It is a story about love and history. Director Rachel Perkins aims to 'present Indigenous iconic stories to Australians' and interweave them with the 'Australian narrative'. (Rating: PG)

Other

Spiegelman, Art, *The Complete Maus*, Penguin, 2003 (2)

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 his wife, 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.

Non-fiction texts

Funder, Anna, *Stasiland*, Text Publishing, 2011 (A) (3)

The German Democratic Republic's (GDR) 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, 31 people sit in one room, reconstructing the files (had they 40 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 (2)

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

Poetry

Kinsella, John, *Peripheral Light – Selected and New Poems*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2006 (A) (4)

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.

Film

***A Passage to India*, Director: David Lean, 1984 (1)**

David Lean's final film, *A Passage to India*, is an adaptation of EM Forster's classic novel of the same name. Set in 1920s India, during the Indian independence movement, the film explores a landscape of change and contrast. As a vehicle for the exploration of the imaginative landscape, *A Passage to India* offers vivid external and internal landscapes. While the characters await the arrival of the monsoon, the growing unrest among Indians and the increasing divide between cultures is evident. The film explores class, the clash of cultures and moral duty, and asks 'what is the *real India*' by reflecting on the ways in which imagination can alter our perception of a place. The events that take place in the novel should generate a great deal of discussion about the influence of landscape and the consequences of attempts to change a landscape. (Rating: PG)

Short stories

Munro, Alice, *The View from Castle Rock*, Vintage, 2006 (3)

Alice Munro draws on her own family history in this collection of stories. Her 18th-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) (2)

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

Coetzee, JM, *Foe*, Penguin, 2010 (A) (1)

JM Coetzee's *Foe* requires an intertextual understanding of Daniel Defoe's classic *Robinson Crusoe*. *Foe* challenges the reader to question the relationship between power and knowledge in constructing our realities and the way we understand the world. Susan Barton, a lone female castaway, is rescued by a man named Cruso and his slave, Friday. She eventually makes her way back to England with Friday and begins a relationship with Coetzee's fictional writer, Foe, in an effort to tell her story. A struggle ensues about who has ownership of the story and the reader is drawn into this as the narrative viewpoint becomes blurred. The tongueless Friday silently calls into question the missing voices from our realities and the stories left untold.

Other literature

Leunig, Michael, *The Lot: In Words*, Viking, Penguin, 2008 (A) (4)

Many Victorians will be familiar with the unconventional views of reality that Michael Leunig presents in his cartoons, particularly through his use of the duck. 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 (2)

The President is in a fix. Political fixer Conrad Brean and his off-sider Winifred Ames enlist Hollywood producer and professional fiction-maker Stanley Motts to divert attention away from the Presidential woes. The trio invents a war with Albania, complete with an anthem and a 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. (Rating: M)

Play

Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman*, Methuen Drama Student Edition, 2010 (3)

Salesman Willy Loman's tragic disintegration embodies the plight of all humans who strive to preserve their significance in a society that 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 while critiquing the fallibility of human perception.

Encountering conflict

Play

Brecht, Bertolt, *Life of Galileo*, Methuen Drama, 1986 (3)

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.

Film

A Separation, Director: Asghar Farhadi, 2011 (1)

Directed by Asghar Farhadi, *A Separation* explores the relationships and conflicts that occur in a contemporary, urban, middle-class family in Tehran. Simin wants to leave Iran with her husband, Nader, and daughter for a different way of life. Nader is torn between his filial duty to his elderly father, suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and his wife's dreams, prompting Simin to file for divorce and leaving their daughter torn. Within the film, family, duty, honour, religion and culture clash to create a richly layered text that challenges cultural stereotypes. Farhadi's film explores moral ambiguities while examining the roles of Iranian men and women, and the conflicts that occur as a result of internal and external pressures. (Rating: M15+)

Novel

Grenville, Kate, *The Lieutenant*, Text Publishing, 2010 (A) (1)

Grenville's historical narrative depicts British colonialism dealing ruthlessly with Indigenous culture, especially when acquiescence is not given. The protagonist, Marine Lieutenant Daniel Rooke, navigates his literal and personal journeys from a troubled childhood in 18th-century Portsmouth to Australia and finally 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 Cadigal people. Rooke's attachment to his 'tutors', particularly the child, Tagaran, tests his loyalties, making him choose between old and newfound friends, patriotic obligations and conscience, leaving him emotionally alienated and, ultimately, physically isolated.

Non-fiction text

Stack, Megan, *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*, Scribe, 2011 (2)

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, *Every Man in this Village is a Liar* 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

Film

Skin, Director: Anthony Fabian, 2008 (4)

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 her issues of identity and belonging despite horrendous obstacles. Her parents were shocked to have a 'coloured' child and 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. (Rating: M)

Play

Lawler, Ray, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, Currency Press, 2011 (A) (3)

Canecutters Roo and Barney return to suburban Melbourne for their 17th 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.

Non-fiction text

Miller, Patti, *The Mind of a Thief*, University of Queensland Press, 2012 (A) (2)

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 also 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 explores Miller's responses to her newfound heritage and her altered sense of identity and belonging.

Novel

Mudrooroo, *Wild Cat Falling*, A & R Classics, 2001 (A) (1)

Published two years before the referendum to include Aboriginal people in the census, *Wild Cat Falling* was the first novel by an Indigenous Australian to be published in Australia. It is a complex representation of an Indigenous, post-colonial experience and one young man's coming of age. The novel's narrator is an unnamed 19-year-old Aborigine of mixed race who, following his release from Fremantle Jail, spends two days drifting across the urban landscape. Following a botched robbery and accidental shooting in his hometown, he escapes into bushland, where he is helped by an elderly Aboriginal man whom he remembers from childhood. His conversations with the elderly man shed light on his 'wild cat' dreams. A first-person narrative divided into three sections that segue into and out of 'depersonalised' third-person recollections, *Wild Cat Falling* is striking in its deceptive simplicity and the immediacy of its emotional world. It explores the ways internal conflict may fog a person's sense of the world and their passage through it, and tackles themes such as social class and displacement, conformity and rebellion, and self-definition and social categorisation. It is a concise, powerful and accessible evocation of wayward youth in a familiar Australian social landscape and offers a raw representation of Indigenous life.