



Quality Teaching Program

The Commonwealth Quality Teaching Program (QTP) provides funding to States and Territories to strengthen the skills and understanding of the teaching profession.



The NSW QTP strategy 2001–2003 involves professional development initiatives that address the following six priority areas:

- Literacy
- Information technology
- Numeracy
- Science
- Mathematics
- VET.

Enhancing literacy in Stage 6 through English is a QTP project which aims to support the implementation of all Stage 6 English courses, develop teachers skills and understandings in teaching literacy in Stage 6 and to support teachers to teach new technologies associated with literacy in Stage 6.

Enhancing literacy in Stage 6 through English has two components:

A. Local Interest Group (LIG) workshops 2001 and 2002.

Local interest group workshops are led by school-based facilitators and are implemented to provide teachers with knowledge, skills and understandings to help them adjust their practice to accommodate the new requirements of the Stage 6 English syllabus. The title of the project *Enhancing literacy in Stage 6 through English*, demonstrates the project's primary focus on the literacy demands of the new Stage 6 English syllabus.

The project was designed to address three main areas of need for teacher development as a result of the requirements of the new syllabus:

1. pedagogy
2. course content
3. standards-referenced assessment.

B. The development of quality resources to demonstrate best practice in the classroom through school-based projects.

This element of the project focuses on identifying best practice and involves teachers who are teaching Stage 6 English courses. These teachers participate in action learning projects to develop school-based case studies.

There are seven case studies:

1. Transition to State 6
2. Fundamentals of English course
3. Preparing students for Stage 6 English
4. Teaching and learning for Stage 6 English
5. Teaching film in Stage 6 English
6. Teaching multimedia texts
7. Encouraging Indigenous students in Advanced and Extension courses.

These seven school-based projects commenced in 2001. They involve schools from each of the three education sectors: NSW Department of Education and Training, NSW Catholic Education Commission and NSW Association of Independent Schools.

These projects will develop a range of school-based resources which will include:

- how to teach students in Years 7–10 and prepare them to address the literacy demands of the Stage 6 English courses
- investigating the use of film and multimedia texts in Stage 6 English
- implementing the Fundamentals course
- how to teach and support Indigenous students to undertake Advanced and Extension English courses.

In this issue of **CURRICULUM SUPPORT** for *teaching in English 7–12* there are articles that outline details of the initial thinking and workplace-learning taking place in some of these projects. All projects look at various aspects of enhancing the literacy skills and understandings of students about to commence or undertake Stage 6 English. However, in some projects this has led to an investigation of programs and practices that need to be implemented prior to Stage 6, in Stages 4 and 5.

A report of the project looking at the Fundamentals of English course, led by Sandra Chapman at Oberon High School, was detailed in the last issue of **CURRICULUM SUPPORT** for *teaching in English 7–12* (2001, Vol. 6, No. 3). Articles about some of the other *Enhancing literacy in Stage 6 through English* case studies appear in this issue:

Riverside Girls High School

QTP Project: junior English Program, pages 1–3

Chifley College, Mount Druitt campus English teaching project, page 4

Reflecting on teaching English at Woolgoolga High School, pages 4–5

Sink your teeth into it, page 16.



It is planned that units of work and resources from all the projects will be available to teachers in the second semester of 2002.

For further details of about QTP in general and updates of the projects as they become available, please visit the QTP web site:
<http://www.qtp.nsw.edu.au/>

Sink your teeth into it

It is said that, in this world, there are only two constants: death and taxes. In the world of English education there is only one constant: students always judge a book by its cover! The more attractive and evocative the cover, the more hands that take up that book. So where better to begin this Quality Teaching Project (QTP) than with a great cover, on the front of Victor Kelleher's book, *Into the Dark*. The red, black and white of an enigmatic female redolent of mystery, desire and promise exudes an ambiguity that is explored to the full in this text.

However, this is not a book review, or even a book cover review. It is an update on the current QTP project that two English teachers are developing. Although a *work in progress*, what we have done so far might be useful for others.

Into the Dark is the focus text in the centre of a text and activity web we are developing. This activity can be used as a model for other text webs. We will be supplying examples that feature *Romeo and Juliet* and *Tarzan* at the centre of their own webs. The text web is situated in a visual literacy scope and sequence grid that focuses specifically on film and multimedia.

Some might exude a few *hmmms* at this promissory note. Here, we wish to share with you the journey so far. *Into the Dark* is a good starting point, as Dracula has become an iconic text with many appropriations that allow differentiated text choice to meet student needs. The Dracula story now sits firmly in popular culture so it was also chosen to illustrate the validity of the study of popular culture. It is worthy of analysis and underpinned by this robust theory.

From this central text, a multiplicity of appropriations in a variety of medium can be addressed; Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* (film classic), *Dracula Spectacular* (script/performance) *Buffy* (TV series), *Just Jeans* advertisement, web sites and picture books, e.g. *Vampires* by Colin and Jackie Hawkins and Enid Von

Bluton. The significant use of popular culture and the medium of film and multimedia, in which students are well versed, requires a shift in the *teacher as authority* paradigm. It encourages useful modes of learning: the *student as expert*, *teacher as learner* and *peer mentoring*. It develops confidence in multiple text studies, which demand synthesis of a wide range of material and theoretical perspectives.

This *text and activity web* sits firmly within a scope and sequence of visual literacy skills. We will develop a scope and sequence as part of the project to be provided along with the theoretical perspectives and metalanguage needed to critique and create visual texts. It is well under way with consternation about should *mise-en-scene* come before or after camera work? Should lighting effects with associated concepts of *film noir*, colours, shadows, contrasts precede or follow symbolism and iconography? Should we include a list of application suggestions for the creation of multimedia? Can we place them in a sequence of difficulty and what exact differences exist between storyboarding for film and for multimedia? The answers to our dilemmas lie in the chaotic fact that there is a myriad of individual difference in students' knowledge and understanding in these areas. Only the individual teacher of each class, of each student can adapt what will be produced to fit the context most effectively. And, of course, the hardware and software available in each school also influence the context. Our scope and sequence grid will really be a guide, not a doctrine for teachers to use in their order choice.

The process of critiquing and creating is cyclical. To internalise the metalanguage and concepts, the critical knowledge must be used in a practical way, in construction. It is easier to construct using the computer as, even when thin on the ground, they are more readily available than video editing equipment and the *big screens* essential for film.

To tie together all areas of visual literacy, we are developing a *Judgement Continuum*. This ranges from *meaningful* to *gratuitous* (crisis of confidence in assigning such judgemental language but we will succeed!) in order to assess textual elements of construction. One of the benefits of this technique is to emphasise to students that the principles of *reading* visual texts are common across all the types of visual texts. This brings us back to the enigmatic woman on the cover of *Into the Dark*. Is she about to sink her teeth into another victim? This is one project we hope you can sink your teeth into.

Deirdre Coleman

Updates and reports on this and other QTP projects will be provided in **CURRICULUM SUPPORT** in 2002.