

There is no perfect formula for getting text selection right

Selecting texts for the English classrooms

Key questions

- How and why do teachers choose texts?
- Should there be a standardised reading list?
- Should students study Western literature?

Texts are central to the study of English and are used for a range of purposes. Students learn through texts, developing their reading and viewing skills, using texts as models for writing and creating. Imaginative and critical engagement with a range of high-quality literature is also a vital part of student learning in the English classroom.

Text selection is an important and complex aspect of teachers' work; there are many factors which they must consider before making their selection. Factors include: purposes for reading; student motivation, interest and enjoyment; community, parent and school expectations; student diversity and planning for increasing complexity and challenge.

Teachers must have the flexibility to select texts based on their professional knowledge and expertise, and in collaboration with students and school communities. Sample reading lists can be a useful resources, but prescriptive lists limit the ability of teachers to make choices sensitive to their students learning needs.

There is no perfect formula for getting text selection right. At any time, one of the many reasons for selecting texts may take precedence over another. For example, a teacher may need to select a more challenging text to meet the needs of a student who is making good progress.

A high-quality, balanced English program should include a wide range of texts which reflect a diverse range of experiences, ideas and contexts, and should span written, spoken and multimodal. This should include Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from a Western tradition, and from and about Asia.

Key points

- Texts are used in the English classroom for a range of purposes.
- Text selection is complex and teachers balance a range of factors when selecting texts.
- A high-quality, balanced English program should include a range of texts which reflect a diverse range of experiences, ideas and contexts.

Further information

For more information, including media queries contact PETAA on 61(0)2 8020 3900 or publishing@petaa.edu.au

Resources to support teachers can be found on the PETAA website www.petaa.edu.au