



English

The Cinemedia web site will put you in touch with most other Australian screen-related web sites.

- **The Australian Film Institute (AFI)** has wonderful screen culture and education programs. It also has an excellent screen research web site: <http://www.cinemedia.net/afi>.
- **The Australian Film Commission** with its user-friendly information service is an excellent research resource: <http://www.afc.net.au>
- **The National Film and Sound Archive** (regional offices and centres in all main cities) has a film lending program which can be searched on the following web site: www.archivenet.gov.au/nfsa.htm
- The biannual journal **Metro Education** (published by Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM): <http://www.cinemedia.net/ATOM>
- The highly motivated and pro-active **English Teachers' Association** extends its commitment to the new English syllabus to non-members and recently published the excellent edition of *Metaphor: Special Film Issue* (ETA NSW, March 1999, Issue 1).

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- The **Australian Film, Television & Radio School web site** will put you in touch with its library and the comprehensive HSC screen education program which the Screen Studies Department proposes to offer teachers and students in NSW. Organisations (and individuals) may join the AFTRS library for a nominal fee. Lending is restricted to written texts but members may view videos in situ: <http://www.aftrs.edu.au>.

The library page on this web site also provides information about all other key screen education and screen culture web sites.

- Local **video stores** can be persuaded to be more adventurous in their acquisition policy
- Local **film societies** have a vast knowledge of film hire and exhibition. Many are happy to collaborate with local teacher programs.

Written texts

A list of print references for teaching films can be found at the end of this article on the New HSC web site: www.newhsc.schools.nsw.edu.au

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CS The Area of Study

The Area of Study is a major, mandatory and central element of four of the courses in the Stage 6 syllabus. It represents 40% of the Standard and Advanced courses in both years of study, 60% of ESL English in the Preliminary year and 50% of ESL in the HSC year and is a compulsory module of work for those students taking Fundamentals of English. It is the basis of common assessment of students taking the Standard and Advanced courses.

What is the purpose of this part of the course?

The purpose is to provide students with the opportunity to explore, analyse and experiment with the ways in which perceptions of a concept are shaped in and through a variety of texts. In other words, this is the study of how different perceptions are expressed in different ways using different types of texts. It is a study of how language is used to shape meaning and is closely related to the study of teacher-developed electives or the HSC module electives. It represents all the approaches to teaching English which are articulated in the syllabus.

“An Area of Study is the exploration of a concept that affects our perceptions of ourselves and our world.” (Syllabus, pages 26 and 44) The “concept” becomes the organiser or the focus for the choice of texts. For example, in the Preliminary year, teachers and students could choose a concept such as “time”, “diversity”, “confrontation”, “love” or “heroism” and then choose a range of texts which provide different points of view of the concept. These texts and the way they are shaped are the objects of study. The concept “change” has been prescribed for the HSC year in 2001.

“Students explore, analyse, question and articulate the ways in which perceptions of this concept are shaped in and through a variety of texts.”

(Syllabus, pages 26 and 44).

However, the phrase “through ... texts” alerts us to a further dimension of this study. Writers use language to shape their point of view or attitude in the text they compose, but different readers may “read” the text in different ways, so meaning is conveyed through the text in various ways. All writers/creators (composers) and readers/viewers (responders) compose and respond according to their particular context, and this could take into account personal, social, historical,

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cultural and workplace conditions. There is therefore a dynamic process through which responders engage with texts (see Glossary, p. 142).

These outcomes indicate how important this idea is to the syllabus.

“A student demonstrates understanding of the relationships between composer, responder, text and context.” (Preliminary outcome 1 for the Standard and ESL courses, Syllabus pp. 24 and 64)

“A student describes the relationships between composer, responder, text and context in particular texts.” (Preliminary outcome 1 for the Advanced course, Syllabus p. 42).

“A student recognises some of the relationships between context and meaning.” (Outcome 1 for the Fundamentals course, Syllabus p. 98)

“A student understands how the responder interacts with text and context to shape meaning.” (Outcome 3 for the Fundamentals course, Syllabus p. 98)

“A student identifies and describes language forms and features and structures of particular texts that shape meaning and identify responses.” (Outcome 4 for the Standard course, Syllabus p. 24)

“A student describes and explains the ways in which forms and features, and structures of particular texts shape meaning and influence responses.” (Outcome 4 for the Advanced course, Syllabus p. 42)

While thorough study within the Area of Study could achieve all the outcomes, these particular ones illustrate the way in which this syllabus is directing teachers and students to study the HOW and WHY of meaning in texts as well as the WHAT.

The Preliminary course descriptions (pages 26 and 44) indicate that strategies should include:

- the close study of one text
- responding to and composing a wide range of related texts
- making connections between texts and the Area of Study
- synthesising aspects of a variety of texts
- presenting coherently integrated interpretations of the concept.

An Area of Study could include two or three of these strategies, or all of them, depending on the needs of the class. Teachers might wish to design more than one Area of Study in the Preliminary year and gradually introduce the more complex activities. The text for close study might be a novel, play or film, for

example, but it could also be a short text such as a poem, a newspaper article, a cartoon or an advertisement. Students should read widely, though, around the concept chosen for study. This reading must include whole, extended, challenging texts, to ensure that all students have access to all outcomes.

When teachers design Areas of Study for the Preliminary year, they need to consider the performance, needs and interests of the students and how best to have them achieve the outcomes of the course.

In the HSC year, the descriptions of the Area of Study (Syllabus, pages 32 and 50) focus study more specifically on language and meaning. The second paragraph directs teachers and students to consider:

- how the text is written or created
- contrasts, similarities and other relationships among texts
- how the language works within texts
- how texts represent the concept
- considering texts from different angles and developing new ideas
- composing from different perspectives
- close study of all elements of language.

Through an integration of the range and variety of practices, students explore, analyse and experiment with the making of meaning, the ways texts are responded to and composed, the ways that the different perspectives of writer and reader affect the making of meaning, relationships among texts and the ways that texts are influenced by other texts and contexts. Students should respond to and compose a wide variety of texts.

What is the difference between the Area of Study and the modules?

For students in the Advanced course, the modules represent extensions of these practices, reinforcing knowledge, skills and understanding gained in the Area of Study and developing them further. In particular, students are required to focus on the ways in which texts are valued (HSC outcome 2A) and to develop their evaluative skills (outcomes 1, 5, 9 and 12A).

The Standard course modules offer a more specialised engagement with specific aspects and skills of the Area of Study. Module A focuses on one aspect of language, Module B on the close study of text, and Module C on texts in their social context.

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