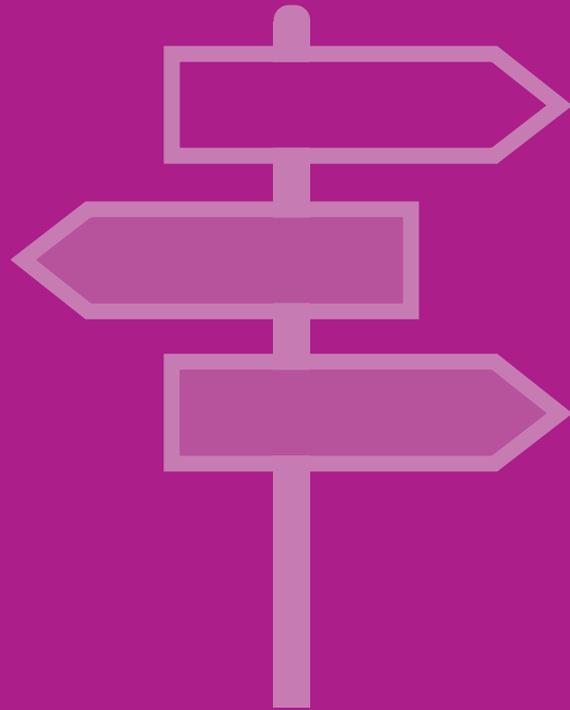


English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19

Principles and Proposals



English 16 to 19

Angela Goddard

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English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19

English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19:

Summary

Talk

Reading 3 to 7

Writing 3 to 7

Reading 7 to 16

Writing 7 to 16

Grammar and Knowledge

about Language

Drama

Media

English 16 to 19

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The United Kingdom Literacy Association

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ISBN 978 | 910543 42 9

ISBN EPUB 978 | 910543 43 6

ISBN AER 978 | 910543 44 3

ISBN ONL 978 | 910543 45 0

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Acknowledgements

I thank Gillian Gibson, Deputy Director, English and Maths at City and Islington College, for providing the information leading to the composition of chapter 9 of this booklet; and Bronwyn Mellor for her careful proofreading of the final text.

Angela Goddard

Preface: English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19

Purpose

This booklet is one of a series about the teaching of language, literacy and English to children and young people aged 3 to 19. The aim of the series is to inspire and inform debate about school strategy. The booklets draw on seminal studies and development work carried out over many years. They have been commissioned by Owen Education, an independent school-improvement agency.

Owen Education's purpose in producing the series is easily stated. There should, in the second decade of the 21st century, be a professional consensus amongst those who teach English to children and young people, or who teach those children and young people *in* English, as to how to help them most effectively gain confidence and competence in the use of English. We observe that though this consensus *should* exist, in practice it does not. We aim here to describe a desirable, intellectually sound and practically achievable consensus around which those who teach English or teach *in* English could unite.

By 'those who teach English or teach *in* English' we mean three groups of professionals: teachers of children aged from three to 11 in early-years settings and primary schools; teachers of the subject English in secondary schools and colleges serving young people between the ages of 11 and 19; and teachers of a range of other subjects in those secondary schools and colleges, for whom it is essential that students have sufficient confidence and competence as readers, writers and speakers of English to access and benefit from the curriculum in those subjects.

There is a particular urgency in our purpose, since all contemporary commentators agree that, whatever progress has been made overall in raising the achievement of learners in English, language and literacy, there is still a large gap between the highest and the lowest achievers. There are still far too many children and young people who are failing to become competent and confident users of English, when there is no valid reason, in terms of their potential, why they *should* fail. Those most at risk of failure are learners from socio-economically poorer backgrounds.



Key principles

We believe that the best work on the development of language and literacy draws on seven basic principles.

1. There is no intellectual achievement more intimately connected to a child's and young person's overall sense of worth as an individual and as a social being than the achievement of competence and confidence in the use of her or his language or languages.
2. The achievement of competence in any aspect of language is prior to and more complex than the achievement of the ability to analyse that aspect of language. Learners nonetheless continually engage in acts of reflection on aspects of the language they encounter and use.
3. The achievement of competence in any aspect of language is principally owed to the enjoyable *experience* of that aspect of language. *Instruction* in an aspect of language has a secondary but nonetheless very significant role to play in this achievement.
4. The learner's brain makes dynamic generalisations from enjoyable experiences of language. These generalisations prepare the learner for new encounters with and uses of language.
5. The motivation for any productive or receptive encounter with or use of language is the desire and need to construct meaning. Producers and receivers of language are both engaged in the construction of meaning.
6. Examples of language and literacy in use in English and of potential value and interest to learners are vast in number and diversity. Some of that diversity should be evident in the selection of examples which teachers present to learners.
7. Learners' experience of language in education should both value and confirm their linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds, and introduce them to cultural and social contexts beyond those they are familiar with.

The seven principles are stated here at a level of generality and abstraction which probably seems high-flown and dry. We shall try to invest them with a living practicality later on. In the meantime, it may be asked: what is so remarkable about them? Are they not self-evident, uncontroversial? The answer is: they should be, but they haven't been. The reason why they haven't been has something to do with the history of the contest for control of the teaching of English, language and literacy in our schools and colleges over the last five decades. It also has to do with the fact that worthwhile professional knowledge can sometimes be forgotten, get lost, in the welter of new initiatives and changes of direction – often politically driven – affecting the curriculum.

The booklets

The series sets out and illustrates a comprehensive and rigorous basis on which learners are enabled to gain confidence and competence in the use of English. The booklets are entitled:

English, Language and Literacy 3 to 19: Summary

Talk

Reading 3 to 7

Writing 3 to 7

Reading 7 to 16

Writing 7 to 16

Grammar and Knowledge about Language

Drama

Media

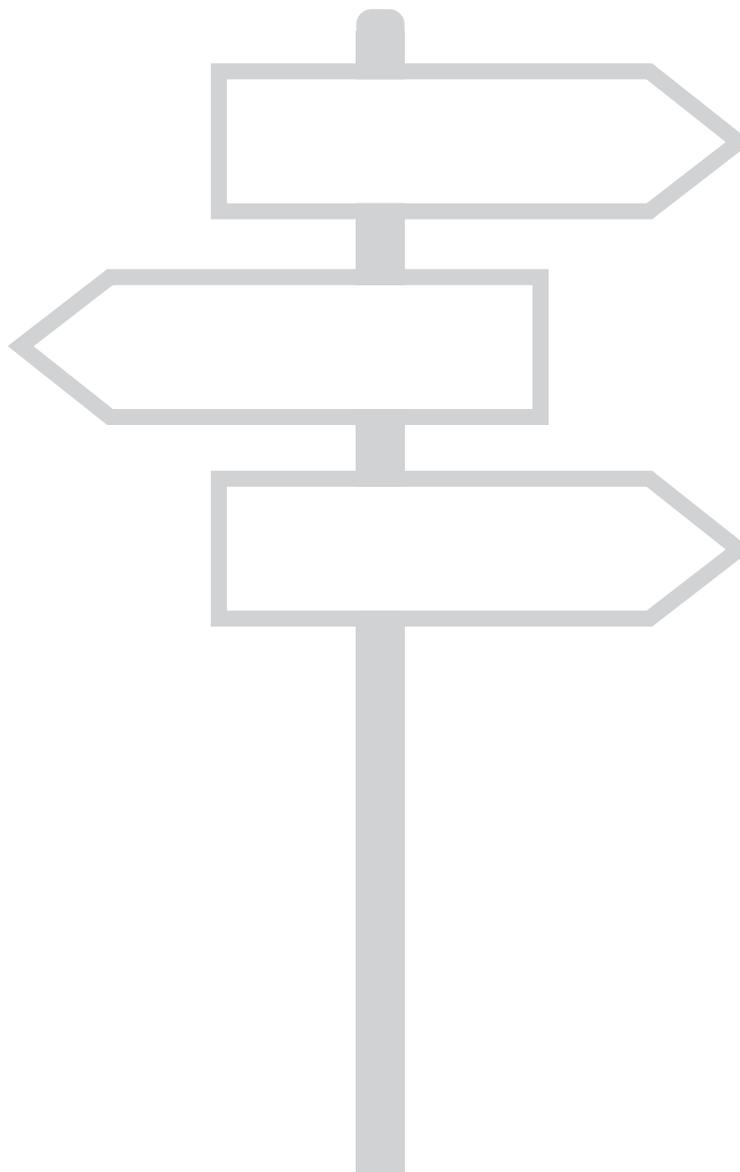
English 16 to 19

There are many connections between the booklets. There are particular connections between this booklet and *Reading 7 to 16*, *Writing 7 to 16*, *Talk*, *Grammar and Knowledge about Language*, *Media* and *Drama*.

John Richmond

Peter Dougill

Mike Raleigh



1 English 16 to 19 – summary of main points

- The history of the study of English post-16 can be traced back to debates in the universities in the late 19th century, which eventually led to the establishment of schools and departments of English. The subject was seen at the time as less rigorous than Classics or Mathematics, and was associated with the need for many more teachers, especially women, after the introduction in 1870 of compulsory state education.
- For the majority of the 20th century, until the 1980s, 'English' meant 'English Literature' post-16.
- At 16 to 19 there is now no single subject called 'English'. At A-level, three different 'Englishes' have developed: English Language; English Literature; English Language and Literature.
- Reform of AS-/A-levels (for courses beginning in 2015) has involved changes to both structure and content, with the aim of ensuring smoother transition for students going on to university.
- Although one of the original aims of the reforms was to free up teaching time in order to deepen and enrich learning, the continuation of AS-level as a 'de-coupled' qualification has faced teachers with new constraints and presented learners with difficult choices.
- Curriculum content for each of the Englishes reveals some significant differences in ideology and approach, and in how the subjects connect with pre-16 curricula. There are missed opportunities to link with secondary-school English; and the reduction of coursework from 40% to 20% of the overall A-level does not reflect the high value that universities place on students' ability to work independently.
- In light of the confusions caused by politically driven changes, it is important to articulate some fundamental principles that underlie positive practice across the English subjects. This the booklet does. Many examples of active, creative approaches are given.
- The booklet also gives examples of how assessment should (but currently doesn't) reflect the literacy practices of modern life, and could embrace new technologies.
- There are key aspects of English study at AS- and A-level that support employability and life skills. These should be part of any 16-to-19 course.
- There is an urgent need for courses offering imaginative and purposeful English study at 16 to 19 that is more applied than that required by AS- and A-levels, and more challenging than that represented by qualifications promoting and assessing functional skills. The government has introduced new qualifications, with courses beginning in September 2014 or September 2015, which go some way towards meeting this need. A still unmet need is for a GCSE-equivalent qualification, retaining the principle of imaginative and purposeful English study, intended for post-16 students who have not gained a level 2 qualification.