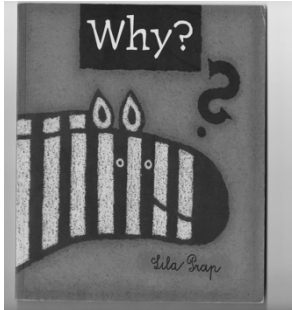



Literacy and inquiry



Workshop presented
by Kath Murdoch
for
ALEA Victoria

Ringwood 2016

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1 word challenge

• **How are you feeling?**

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What are we inquiring into this evening?

- How can we use stimulate curiosity through texts?
- How can literature help support the development of students' inquiry skills?
- How do we bring an 'inquiry stance' to our work as literacy educators?

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A snapshot of inquiry learning...

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Essentially

- **A stance/disposition** adopted by both teachers and children

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Essentially...

- An approach that encourages students to **question, investigate, analyse, synthesise, act and reflect**. Students do the 'cognitive heavy lifting'

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Essentially

- Students investigate – they are **positioned as researchers**

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- Concept driven and integrative
- Strong emphasis on the development of **transferable skills and dispositions**
- Emphasis on authentic contexts - connecting learning with 'real life' experience

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Based on the belief that learning is:

- An activity of construction (**making meaning not receiving**)
- Driven by a sense of learner agency (**their sense of intention, capability and choice**)
- Dependent on monitoring and **reflection**

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Inquiry is an *approach*...

- Not a 'subject'
- Not something that only happens during 'unit' time
- Not just about how to plan – it's about how to teach.
- Not just for science, humanities and health

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And make no mistake....

- Inquiry is not for the faint hearted. True inquiry teaching and learning is rigorous and explicit. To do it well, you need to
- Know your **students** (as people, as learners)
- Know your **curriculum**
- Know your **pedagogy**

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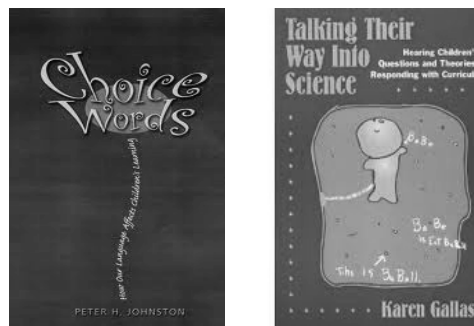
- How can we use stimulate curiosity through texts?

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Mind your language

It is *discourse* rather than delivery of content that helps shape the manner of learning and the attitude towards it.

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Language as a 'lubricant' for powerful learning

- "I wonder..." represents a class of linguistic lubricants. It marks the offering of a possible hypothesis, or a tentative idea with an invitation, (but not an insistence) to pick it up and improve it or take it further. For group discussions to take place such lubricants are necessary. Other examples include "maybe", "seems like", "perhaps" or "I think"...this kind of "exploratory talk" brings multiple minds together to work on the same problem in powerful ways.

Peter Johnson

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Teacher talk to stimulate students' thinking

- *What does that make you wonder?*
- *What makes you say that?*
- *So how is your/our thinking changing?*
- *What an interesting question...where might you take that idea?*
- *Now THAT's got me thinking in a new way...*
- *Isn't this fascinating? How INTERESTING – that's really got my brain working hard. I LOVE this feeling!*
- *What if? Maybe? Possibly? Might? Could?*

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Careful handling of children's questions

How we **respond** to children's questions influences the way they think ABOUT their questions...and indeed about the nature of learning itself

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A fraction of the whole

- Sharing part of the text, a glimpse....teasing the reader/viewer so that they are hungry to know more...

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Strategies...

- Blind sequencing
- Possible sentences

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Literature as stimulus/
mentor texts for curiosity
and questioning

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- How can we explore literature in a way that develops students' inquiry skills?

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We bring the world into the classroom through text.

- Texts **help construct our view of the world**. We need to support students to develop a critical orientation towards texts - to be able to interrogate, compare, analyse, critique and reflect on the view of the world the text conveys and on their own. (Hamston and Murdoch, 2002:14)

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- “Books often leave us changed...perhaps we have gained more knowledge, expanded our understanding of a time, a place, some events, a topic, or perhaps, as we enter the lives of fictional people in a book, we end up understanding life a little better – how families work, or how people abuse power or how to deal with loss.” Harvey and Daniels(2009:201)

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- Literature brings the world to the classroom.
- It is an expression of the author's own inquiry into the 'big ideas'

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Literature as a valid source for 'truth seekers'

- *I learned way more about the holocaust from reading 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' than I did when we had to read all those articles in year 10.*

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Building skills of synthesis through literature

- Synthesising is an essential skill for inquiry.
- As we gather information to seek answers to our questions, we must learn to make connections AND to continually revise and modify our thinking...

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- Using literature to teach synthesis

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- Use literature to help build students' understandings within a broader inquiry.
- Literature helps bring multiple perspectives to a concept

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Using literature within a 'unit of inquiry'

Big question: "How do friendships change us?" - examples

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Understandings

- There are many different kinds of friendships.
- Friendships can change over time
- We can each make a positive difference to the life of another person through our words and actions.

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Literature within the inquiry cycle

Tuning in

- Activate 'first ideas' through connections with the text
- Make connections to students' previous experiences
- Stimulate an emotional connection to the inquiry
- Stimulate questions/issues/uncertainties

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Finding out

- In conjunction with other research methods (interviewing, surveys, film clips, image analysis, playground observations)
- Consider the way friendship is framed across a range of texts.

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'Finding out'

- How does this writer see a 'friend'?
- How does friendship change the lives of people in this text?
- What is *not said* about friendship?
- What new questions does this raise for us?
- How does the text compare with what we have discovered?
- What connections can we make between the texts?
- How is our thinking changing?

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Sorting out (examples)

- Data charts, venn diagrams and other graphic organisers
- Thinking routines such as 'think, puzzle, explore'; tug for truth; I used to think but now I think;
- Comprehension strategies (TS; TT, TW); talk to the author, question in role
- Using the arts to respond, re-interpret

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- How do we bring an 'inquiry stance' to our work as literacy educators?

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“Stand alone” literacy-based inquiry

- Students investigate the meaning of the prefix “trans” and seek out examples from a range of texts and contexts
- Students embark on an inquiry into the question “what makes a great poem?”
- Students inquire into the question ‘How do writers paint a picture with words?’

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We bring an inquiry stance to literacy teaching when we

Ask before telling – when we invite students to theorise and share their thinking

Use questions to drive ‘units’ : *eg – ‘What makes a great opening sentence to a narrative?’*

How do persuasive texts work?

Show fascination for how the structure and conventions of language work

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