Scan

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NSW GOVERNMENT

Information fluency

Improve student writing

Post-truth and history

Contents

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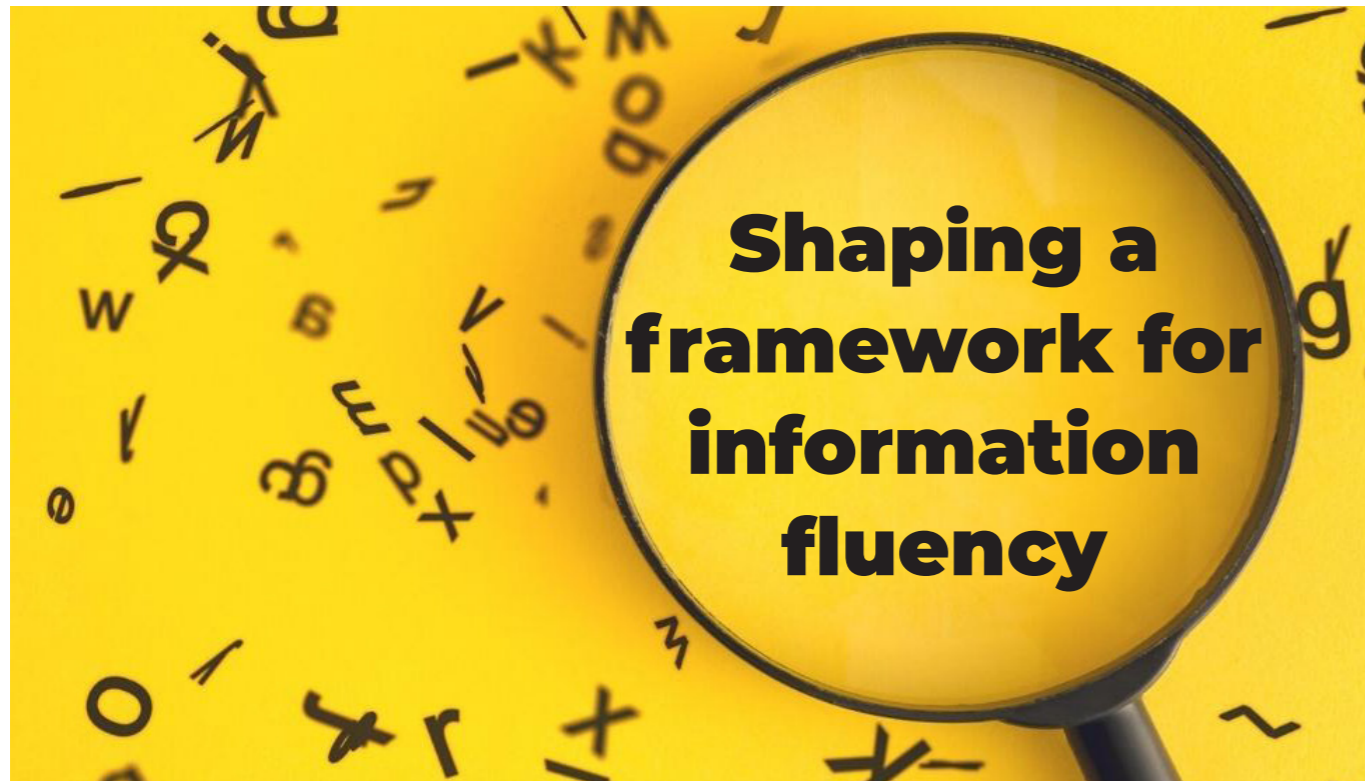
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Shaping a framework for information fluency

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In this article, Aaron Cook describes the process taken to develop a whitepaper for an information fluency framework. The whitepaper was developed as a workplace learning activity for a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship).

The story so far

An earlier Scan article by June Wall (2019) outlined the initiation of an 'ongoing and practitioner led' process to define and describe information fluency. A working party of forward-thinking and expert teacher librarians was established to lead this process. This group debated, discussed and collaborated to produce a detailed description of information fluency informed by practitioner expertise and educational research.

My challenge was to build on this work to produce a framework ready for a 2021 implementation pilot.

Beginning with the end in mind

'A problem well-stated is a problem half-solved', is a pertinent quotation attributed to inventor Charles Kettering, and sometimes, to John Dewey. Thus, it was important that the purpose of the information fluency framework was deeply understood, and that I was aware of the context in which it would sit.

The vision for a successfully implemented and acknowledged framework is one where students, teachers, principals, and the school community appreciate, support and fully utilise the expertise of the teacher librarian.

Hence, the framework is envisioned as a small but significant step in communicating the expertise of the teacher librarian in such a way that encourages more frequent and effective collaboration. It is assumed that when the teacher librarian and the school library are being used to their full potential, student outcomes will benefit.

To achieve this vision, a series of principles were agreed upon within the working party. The principles stated that the information fluency framework will:

- define the expertise of teacher librarians in a way that resonates with a range of audiences
- support teacher librarians, as experts in process, to work collaboratively with teachers, as experts in content
- provide a shared language and framework to bring together silos (across a school, across outcomes)
- be consistent with academic research
- be internally consistent, and consistent with stage-based outcomes
- be a useful tool in supporting students 'learning how to learn'.

The following actions were undertaken at each stage of the framework development to ensure the principles were reflected:

- Research – conduct a brief literature review to understand what researchers suggest as the elements of information fluency, and the skills within each element.
- Make links – make connections with syllabus outcomes, including general capabilities.
- Ensure consistency – ensure structure and language is consistent across elements.
- Focus on the user – ensure language and structure is meaningful to all audiences.
- Integrate – explore links between elements to reduce overlap and find the best place for each skill.

The end result, the whitepaper, is presented as a launching pad, that is a tool for teacher librarians to implement, evaluate and improve. Therefore, it is important that the thinking behind the framework is articulated within the whitepaper. While the content within the outcome progressions is expected to be refined throughout a pilot process, a rationale is needed to justify the given structure.

A deep dive into a vast ocean

The first step in developing and documenting the framework was to conduct a brief literature review. This included researching academic papers, grey literature and professional publications. This approach was taken to define and describe the overall competency of information fluency as well as the individual skills within (Zhang, 2010).

The initial framework description put forward by the teacher librarian working group was closely aligned to five information fluency frameworks found in the literature. The following table is a summary of these information fluency frameworks. Elements have been arranged by the framework (vertically) and grouped by affinity across frameworks (horizontally).

An important distinction to make here is the difference between information literacy and information fluency. Information fluency builds on what we have become familiar with as information literacy and has been the primary focus for all libraries, especially school libraries, since 1987 (Wall, 2019). Since that time, much has changed in the world of information.

J. Sharkey (2013)	W. Zhang (2002)	University of Alaska Fairbanks (n.d.)	C. Heine & D. O'Connor (2014)	New York City School Library System (2020)
Establishing twenty-first-century information fluency	**Developing web-enhanced learning for information fluency: A liberal arts college's perspective**	**Information fluency: A framework for assessing student understanding**	**Teaching information fluency: How to teach students to be efficient, ethical, and critical information consumers**	**Empire State information fluency continuum**
Technology	Computer literacy		Digital	
	Critical thinking	Critical thinking	Evaluation / critical thinking	Reflection and curiosity
Access information Synethesise, evaluate information	Information literacy		Search, Access, Use information	
Create				Design thinking Action
Communication Collaboration		Presentation Participation		Communication Multimedia literacy
			Language	
		Domain knowledge	Learn	Inquiry
			Ethical and social	Ethics and citizenship / cultural understanding

A summary of the five information fluency frameworks found in the literature. Elements have been arranged by the framework (vertically) and grouped by affinity across frameworks (horizontally).

Figure 1. The framework will support teachers to collaborate with teacher librarians to developed shared outcomes

For the first time in history, we're exposed to a glut of information through devices we access, on average, 7-10 hours a day (McCrindle, 2018; Sweeney, 2017). Much of this information is conveyed to us based on algorithms that predict our biases. Therefore, the skills that students need to navigate this information have become increasingly complex. In summary, the real difference between information literacy and fluency lies not in what searchers or consumers do but how they do it (Reid-Smith, 2015).

The curriculum has also drastically changed over this time. One of the most significant events being the development and inclusion of the general capabilities. The general capabilities share many of the same skills with those described in the information fluency frameworks above. It is therefore important to better understand this relationship, ensuring an information fluency framework complements the development of these skills within learning areas.

Framing the framework

While the general capabilities have been embedded within learning area content and are increasingly valued for their importance in a complex and dynamic society, 'they are yet to be consistently embedded across schools' (Gonski, 2018, p.40). An important feature of the information fluency framework to communicate is its role in supporting the development of these general capabilities.

The position presented in the whitepaper is that general capabilities are embedded within, and best developed through, learning area content. Therefore, the best person to develop these outcomes is the classroom teacher. The teacher librarian has expertise in how these capabilities are used and developed when using information. Therefore, the teacher librarian is best placed to develop a student's ability to use information to achieve learning area outcomes (including those linked to general capabilities). This is proposed to best occur through a collaborative
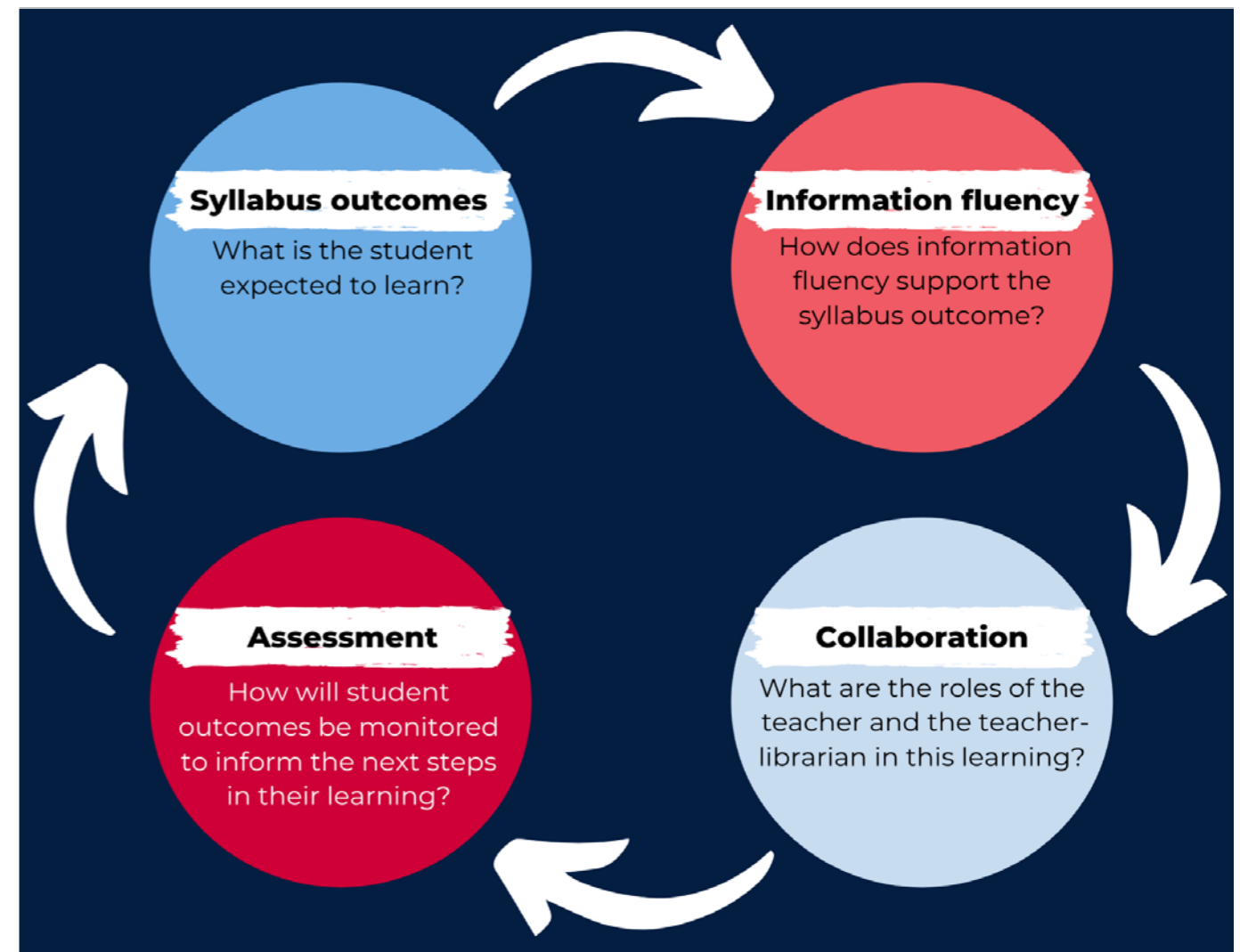
teaching relationship, inspired by the work of Sharratt and Fullan (2012).

Proposing a structure

The framework is presented as five elements that, together, encompass the skills students need to use information fluently.

The elements are aligned to the general capabilities, to ensure that no additional content or skills have been added to an already crowded curriculum (NESA, 2020). They are also representative of the frameworks and descriptions found in the literature.

A notable exception is the explicit mention of technology. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is presented as a thread that runs through the elements – enabling students to investigate, create and communicate information fluently.

The following images provide a representation of the elements and their relationship with the general capabilities. The red sections are the elements of the information fluency framework. Blue and pink circles show the relevant aspects of the general capabilities.
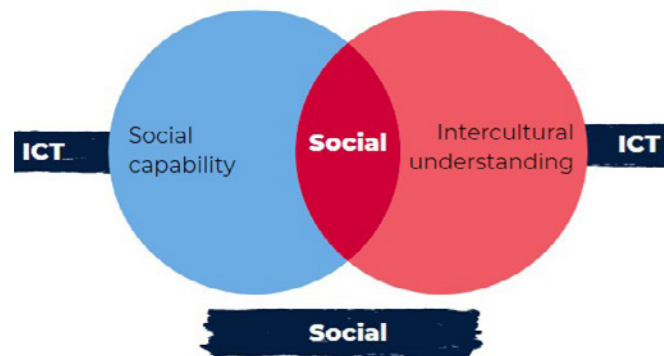
Elements

The five elements are:
- Social
- Literate
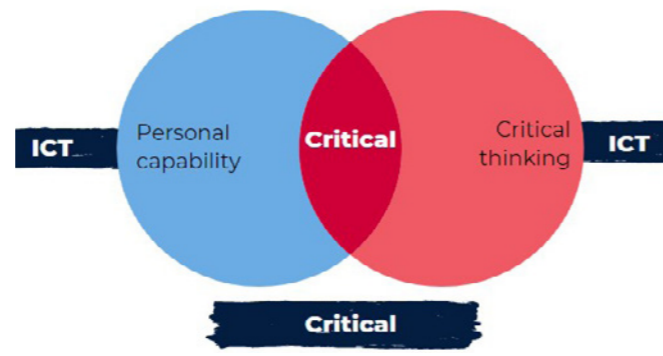- Innovative
- Critical
- Ethical

Social

Students learn with, and from, diverse groups of people. This element combines aspects of social capability with intercultural understanding.

Literate

Students create and communicate an understanding of information through texts.

Innovative

Students generate and implement new and useful ideas. This element combines creative thinking with the implementation of ideas using information.
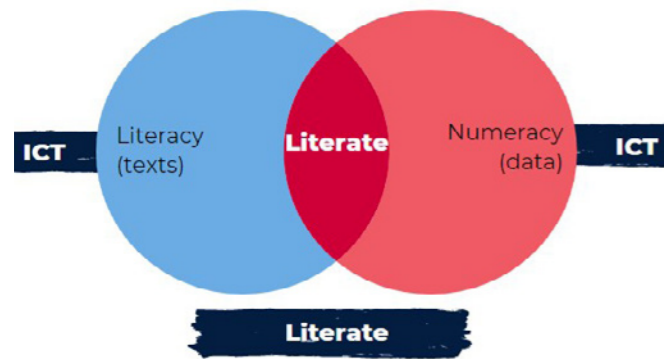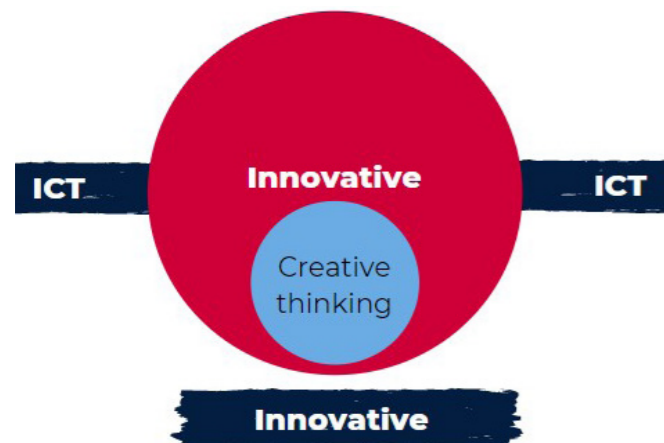

Critical

Students evaluate and use information to reflect and solve problems. This element includes aspects of personal capability and critical thinking.

Ethical

Students apply reasoning to consider the influence and impact of information on others.

Strands

The decision was made to delineate the ways in which students engage with information into two strands:
- As consumers of information
- As creators of information.

For some elements, sub-elements are repeated in each strand. For example, one must consider the logic and reasoning of information they consume, and also apply logic and reasoning to the information they create. For other elements, different outcomes are suggested for consumers and creators. For example, generating ideas is seen as a sub-element for creating information but not for consuming information.

Sub-elements

Sub-elements break down each element into a small number of statements that describe the development of student outcomes. An attempt was made to keep the number of sub-elements small to prevent the framework from becoming cumbersome and overwhelming. This was balanced with coverage (ensuring all relevant skills are covered) and specificity (ensuring each outcome is focused).

Progressions

Outcomes are presented along a progression, linked to learning stages. The outcomes are informed by the ACARA general capabilities learning continua, literacy and numeracy progressions and NESA syllabuses.

The progressions are put forward as a hypothesis – a prediction of how students may develop the skills outlined. It's perceived that these will be tested and refined through a pilot study with teacher librarians in 2021.

Ending with the beginning in mind

There are infinite ways to describe and categorise the skills of information fluency. This framework presents one take on this taxonomy, intended as a launching platform for a pilot study. It will continue to evolve through practitioner experience, turning evidence-based practice into practice-based evidence.

In the Scan article 'Information fluency – a path to explore and innovate?', June Wall (2019) relayed the mantra 'innovation is the new black'. In the information fluency whitepaper, innovation is defined as the generation and implementation of creative ideas. With the creative ideas now on paper, it is time for implementation. As information fluent teachers, we realise this is not a straight-forward or linear process. It will require critical thinking, collaboration, and many of the skills we hope to develop in our students. The potential in doing this well is revitalising the role of the teacher librarian as one who can support development of the capabilities, we value yet find challenging to implement.
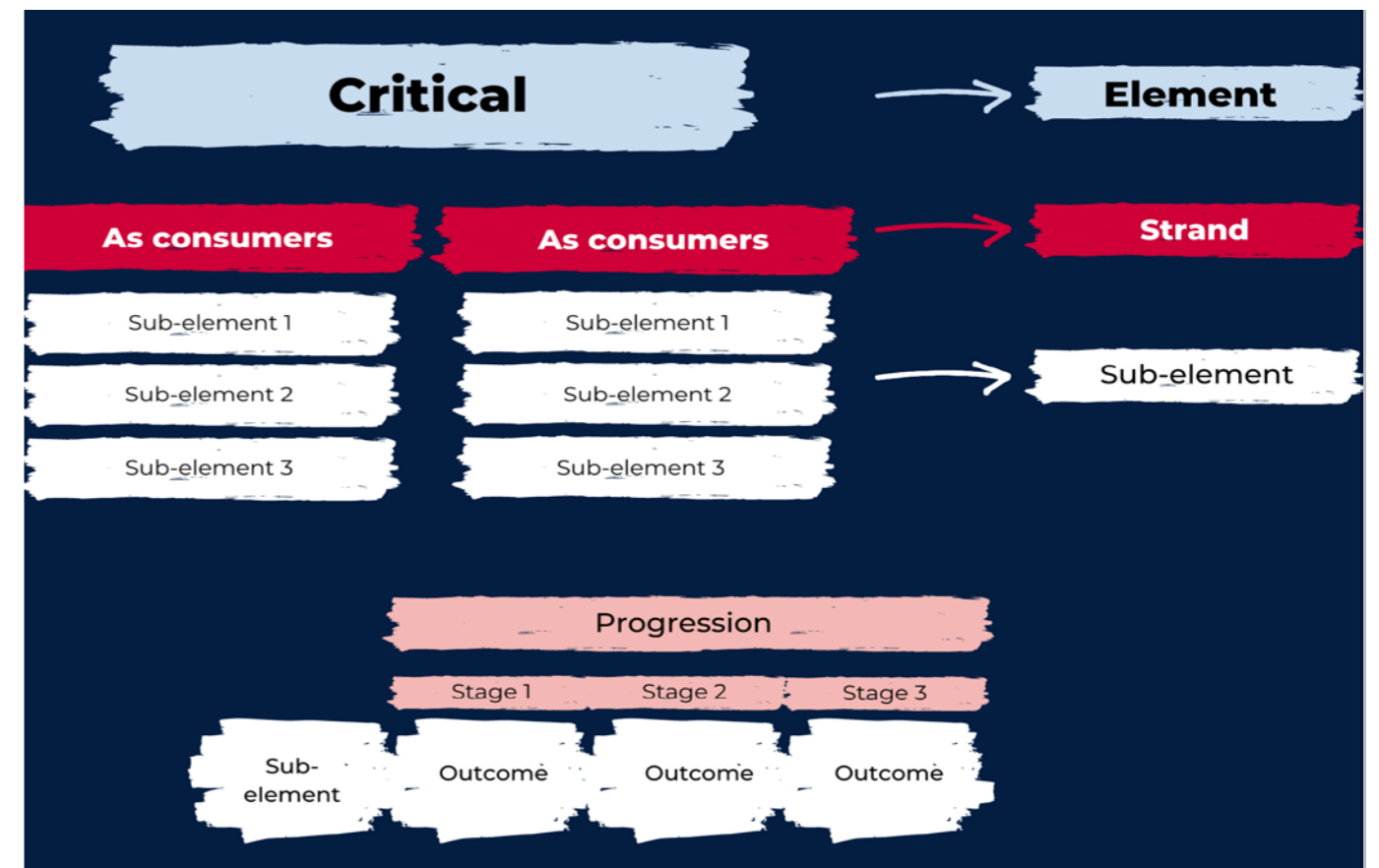

Figure 2. An overview of the framework structure

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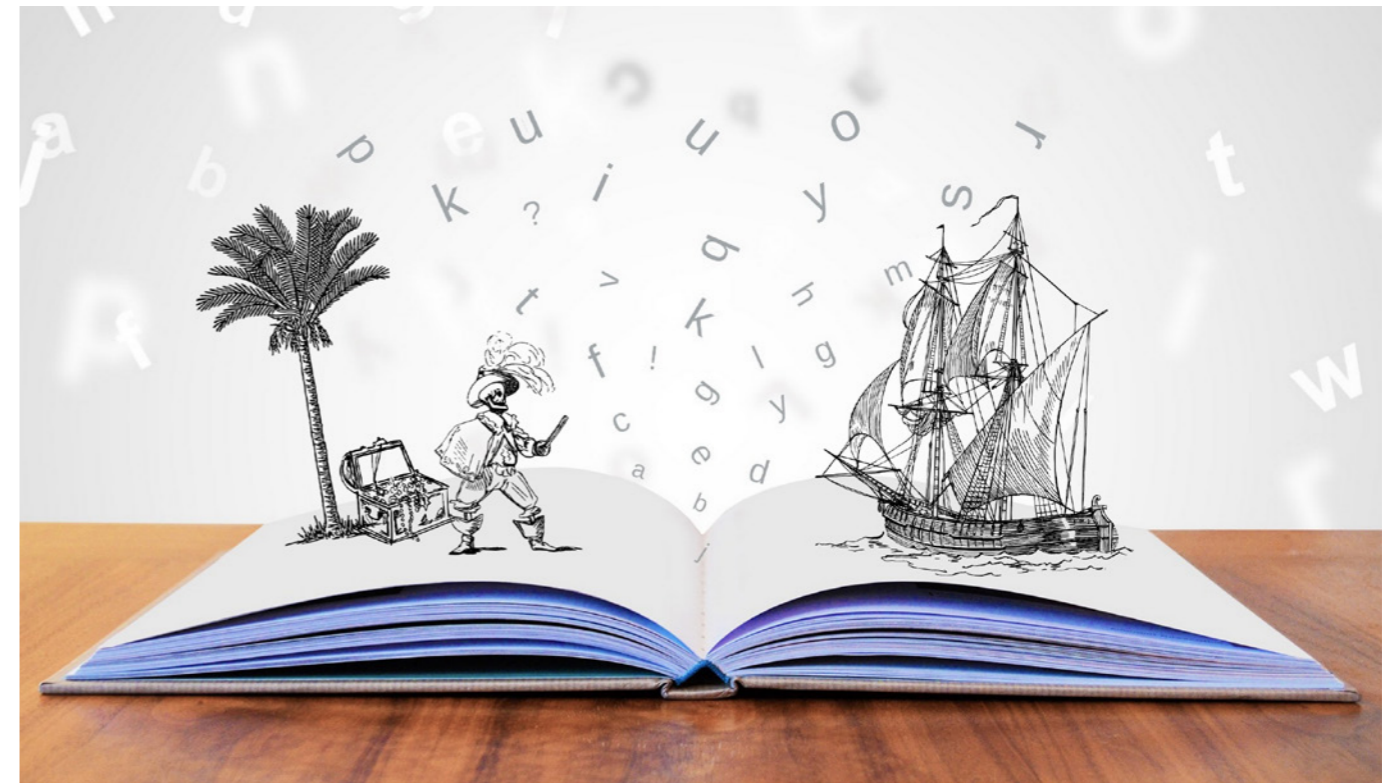
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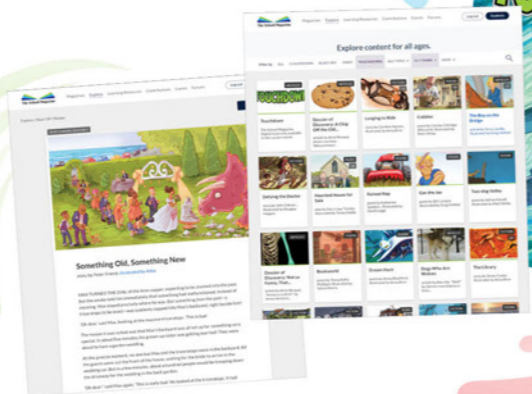
Using model sentences to improve student writing

Tim Creighton
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In this article, Tim Creighton explains how authentic model sentences can be used to explicitly teach sentence structure and improve students' creative writing, based on the Stage 3 Writing Learning Resource from The School Magazine.

Teachers are always looking for strategies and activities to improve student writing. As dedicated professionals, we spend hours gathering resources, scouring books and magazines for appropriate material, and developing resources that cater for the individual needs of each student, as well as the collective needs of the class. We explicitly teach and model writing, always encouraging students to read so that they absorb how authors write.

Using an '–ing' phrase to 'show, not tell'

One valuable strategy to try in class involves using authentic model sentences to explicitly teach sentence structure. For example, try the idea below, which uses a special type of '–ing' phrase to develop students' ability to 'show, not tell'.

Step 1: Provide a model sentence

Provide students with this model sentence from Harry Potter:

'Pinching his nose, Harry drank the potion down in two large gulps.'

Ask students:

- What do you notice about the sentence? (Guide students to notice how the sentence is punctuated.)
- Why does Harry drink the potion in two large gulps? After discussing the meaning, remove the opening phrase – **'Pinching his nose'** – and ask how the meaning has changed. (Guide students to notice that the sentence no longer shows that the potion is foul and, without the opening '–ing' phrase, we think Harry is very thirsty.)

> Explain to students that authors use an '–ing' phrase to 'show, not tell'. Readers are invited to make inferences and 'experience the story through action, words, thoughts, senses, and feelings', rather than via the writer's factual description. Highlight that this 'show, don't tell' technique is a powerful tool that students can use in their own creative writing.

Step 2: Imitate the model sentence

As a guided/joint writing task, imitate the model sentence, focusing on the structure. Remind students that when we begin a sentence with an '–ing' word, we are likely to need a comma to separate the phrase from the main part of the sentence.

You could have a joint construction like:

A. **'Scratching his head, John looked at the examination paper.'**
B. **'Rubbing her hands together, Julia stood in front of the fire.'**

Step 3: Reflect on the co-constructed sentences

Ask students about what the sample sentences you wrote together show the reader, and repeat the process from earlier of removing the opening '–ing' phrase to show how the meaning changes. In example A, the '–ing' phrase shows that John is

confused or unsure. Discuss with students that using an '–ing' phrase is a better way of communicating than telling. You could rewrite the sentence so that it 'tells' that John was confused (**'John was confused as he looked at the examination paper'**) and then compare with the better version.

Step 4: Invite students to compose their own sentences

Now, ask students to write their own imitation of the model sentence, then share it. These sentences could form part of a classroom display. Or you could collect them via a Google Form as a formative task to identify who has understood how to punctuate this type of sentence.

Step 5: Consolidate the learning

Finally, you could:

- ask students to review a piece of writing they previously completed – this time, including the '–ing' phrase
- provide a new writing task and ask students to incorporate the '–ing' technique in their response
- assign students to look for this structure in a book/article assigned to the class.

Other models

Here are some more sentences that use this '–ing' phrase. You could use these sentences over a week to explicitly model the sentence structure variations, and to reinforce the concept.

1. **'The crocodile, pretending to be a harmless log, glided silently toward her.'**
   (Rani Manicka, 'The Rice Mother'.)
2. **'A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting.'**
   (Doris Lessing, 'The Summer Before the Dark'.)
3. **'Sophie, sitting on the Big Friendly Giant's hand, peeped out of the cave.'**
   (Roald Dahl, 'The BFG'.)
4. **'The fly in the spider web was beating its wings furiously, trying to break loose and free itself.'**
   (E.B. White, 'Charlotte's Web'.)
5. **'The children, shouting and screaming, came charging back into their homeroom.'**
   (Rosa Guy, 'The Friends'.)
6. **'Holding him by the ears, the Trunchbull lowered him back into his chair beside the desk.'**
   (Roald Dahl, 'Matilda'.)

7. **'Standing in the clear sunshine, the prince breathed in the sweet, fresh air.'**
   (Sid Fleischman, 'The Whipping Boy'.)
8. **'Remembering the crash, he had a moment of fear, a breath-tightening little rip of terror.'**
   (Gary Paulsen, 'Hatchet'.)

Looking for more writing resources?

The teaching idea above comes from a resource developed by The School Magazine. It forms part of an exciting project geared at providing high quality resources to subscribing teachers to improve student writing. This Stage 3 writing resource contains a suite of activities based on a specific article in the magazine. There are currently 6 resources within the Writing Learning Resource, with each containing the following elements:

1. Pre-reading activity.
2. Post-reading activities: comprehension questions and a 'Here, Hidden, Head' Three Level Reading Guide.
3. Slide decks on writing structures evident in the text, supporting explicit/modelled and guided teaching. (These are downloadable.)
4. Language activities on the story, related to the slide decks.
5. Writing activity and rubric.
6. Formative assessment quiz.

Pre-reading

The pre-reading activity in each resource is a prediction activity called 'story impressions'. Students write a paragraph using a word list drawn from the stimulus. (Learn more about this type of activity in Denner's (1986) overview: Story-impressions: A prereading writing activity.)

Post-reading

The post-reading activities include your choice of a 'Here, Hidden, Head' Three Level Reading Guide or a series of comprehension questions. We provide you with different options to save you time, and so that you can choose the most relevant activity for your students. For example, you may elect to use the 'Here, Hidden, Head' Three Level Reading Guide because your students need extra support in developing inferential thinking. Or maybe the focus is on full sentence answers to questions, so you choose the standard comprehension questions as the better activity for your students.

Slide decks and language activities

In the same manner, choose the appropriate slide decks and activities on sentence structures for your class. These slide decks provide explicit, modelled, guided and independent writing instruction activities to use with your students. The strength of the slides and activities is that they make explicit an author's craft. For example, the same tools that writers like JK Rowling or Roald Dahl use are adopted by authors

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in The School Magazine – and can be learned by our students. The structure can be further reinforced in the subsequent Let's Write activity, where the customisable rubric includes this as a required feature.

Let's Write

The Let's Write component of each resource is a short writing task for students based on the ideas within the story or article. It may involve a picture as a stimulus, or an imaginative response to the story from The School Magazine.

The customisable rubric allows you to insert the relevant language structures you chose from the story. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate this piece of learning in their writing. This fast, formative task enables you to quickly identify student progress and learning, without assessing an extensive piece of writing. The rubric is used as a self-review and enables every student to experience success.

Assessment

A short quiz (via Google Forms) is available for each resource. This can be copied to your Drive and used with your students. We have aligned the quizzes to Stage 3 outcomes, and again they are modifiable for your class.

We look forward to publishing these resources in Term 1. Of the 6 resources, 1 will be published on the Primary curriculum hub, while the other 5 will be available to subscribers of The School Magazine's digital subscription.

Look out for the following Stage 3 resources, based on the Touchdown (Year 6) and Orbit (Year 5) magazines:

- Defying the Doctor
- Sound Wave
- Where the Blue Bees Fly
- Buried
- Family Gathering
- The Kookaburra's Laugh.

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Post-truth and its impact on history teaching in secondary schools

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David Nally shares an overview of his research on 'post-truth', followed by pedagogical suggestions to promote deep thinking about the dissemination of information and its impact on the study of history.

Review of research and theories

In recent years, there appears to be two main perspectives that have developed in relation to 'post-truth'. The first viewpoint is epitomised in Stephen Green's 'The Coherent Past' (2019) which surveys the *longue durée* (the long term) understanding of how the nature of truth and knowledge has evolved during the post-Enlightenment era towards displaying an increasing emphasis on subjectivity. A second perspective traces the origins of post-truth to an earlier time. In Ralph Keyes' 'Post-Truth' (2004), and more recently in Yuval Noah Harari's '21 Lessons for the 21st Century' (2018), the authors propose that post-truth began as far back as when people started telling lies, because such behavior indicates a willful distortion of reality.

This article will dispute both of these perspectives, by arguing that post-truth is instead a recent construction of information that attempts to re-craft history by showing how the present is deficient when compared with any given stage when a nation was assumed to be more prominent on a global stage. As such, post-truth is distinct from 'lying', 'fake news' and forms of denialism. Part of this process will examine how the evolution of post-truth has been propelled during times of radical breaks in public trust of authority figures. The Watergate Scandal will be used as a starting point, since it has featured in most post-truth literature, and there will be some elaboration on how Jean Baudrillard's simulation theory of knowledge accounts for the way post-truth began to develop in response to the First and Second Gulf Wars. These events represent prime examples of the re-crafting of knowledge towards post-truth and indicate how it began to evolve as being distinct from 'lying', 'fake news' and forms of denialism during the last two decades. I will conclude by suggesting a series of conventions that can be attributed to post-truth and an alternative definition, in an attempt to make the subject more comprehensible for teachers and students. This approach is intended to pave the way for establishing future pedagogies that more effectively address this change in 'knowledge'.

Much of the commentary and epistemological work on post-truth has been undertaken by creative artists, journalists and philosophers. This point is borne out in the term being coined in an op-ed (opinion piece often printed on the opposite page to a newspaper editorial) by the playwright Steve Tesich. Lamenting in 1992 that the American public were not interested in knowing 'uncomfortable truths,' he asserted that they were creating a feeling of security in their own lives by clinging on the USA's 'mirage as a military superpower' (Tesich, 1992). Although he did not refer to any sources to evidence his claims, Tesich wrote with the intention of distilling the zeitgeist of the early 1990s as an ignorance of (and hostility towards) 'uncomfortable truths,' which was emblematic of sacrificing civic responsibilities in favour of being guaranteed a comfortable life. In turn, citizens' about-face away from public life to individualistic and highly localised concerns reflects a disinterest with critiquing or constructively responding to the actions of authorities which claim to keep them safe from harm.

For Tesich, post-truth was epitomised in the public response to Gerald Ford's pardoning of Richard Nixon in late 1974. Nixon was acquitted of all crimes that he 'committed or may have committed' against the United States while serving as President (Tesich, 1992). There was no clarity provided about what these misdemeanors were. In the short term, there was public outrage, due to this pardon contradicting the majority opinion demonstrated by both American Federal Houses of Government and the general public. Matters were further inflamed by their both being Republican. In the long term however, it provided both Ford and Nixon with some linguistic leverage to dodge questions about their accountability in subsequent public appearances (Rozell, 1994).

The post-Watergate Scandal reaction by Ford and Nixon provides an instructive forerunner of post-truth in three respects:

1. Nixon pursued a strategy of discrediting the impeachment process and undermined its ability to uncover the extent to which he deceived the public;
2. Ford's stated intention of restituting the dignity of the Presidency (and by extension, the United States) involved persuading the nation to collectively forget the disgrace Nixon had brought. Considering that Ford was also a Republican, his pardon of Nixon was in his own political interest. It shifted control of a national narrative to being firmly in the hands of the governing political party, away from the Democrats and whistleblowers who had instigated the Watergate inquiry;
3. Alternative accounts, such as the whistleblower 'Deepthroat' and Robert Cox, who had been appointed as Special Prosecutor to the investigation, were not mentioned in any government press release in the wake of Nixon's resignation.

Essentially, an aspect of a post-truth climate is the growing perception of frustrations with the present, resulting in a tendency of looking into the past for solutions. Post-truth forms of perception are therefore signified by the past being framed as static, rather than able to inform future understanding. In Tesich's case, he was writing about post-truth in the immediate aftermath of the First Gulf War, when announcements were made by George Bush Snr. that the war was 'unavoidable' and significant numbers of American troops were stationed

in the Middle East (Tesich, 1992). While the Bush administration's phrasing of this announcement was intended to cultivate a narrative of American military supremacy, it in fact gave the impression of disempowering democratic institutions by favouring the projection of authority on a global scale. Further, the Nixon, Ford and Bush administrations testify that a characteristic of post-truth is the prevalence of a historical narrative of social decline, which is due to a political class which is (or is represented as) inept, aloof and/or corrupt. The public is thereby convinced they are represented by people who ignore the interests they were elected to advocate. In this way, events such as Watergate only constitute a moment of post-truth when they become thoroughly embedded in public memory. In turn, any attempt to rectify wrongdoings can be construed as being detrimental to present circumstances.

What is post-truth?

Post-truth appears to be characterised by knowledge being withheld or deployed with the intention of disempowering the general public, who are then left to speculate on what information they are not privy to. It therefore involves knowledge reflecting the dominant perspectives that act in favour of a political hierarchy. As such, all perspectives within this paradigm have value that is dependent on the political status of those to whom they belong. Consequently, post-truth constitutes re-shaping public memory of past events in favour of the dominant political spectrum, leading to the creation of new and inauthentic realities, where there appears to be an eternal present, without a clearly perceptible past or a future.

Jacques Baudrillard explained that these conditions arose within the Watergate Scandal, by way of it being '… a means to regenerate a moral and political principle' (Baudrillard, 1983). Therefore, the scandal itself can be viewed as a strategy whereby the Ford administration surreptitiously denounced the value of authentic memories of the event. When Nixon's actions became public knowledge, they presented an opportunity for Ford to conduct a moral purge, since Nixon's actions had become a primary focus of national attention. By glossing over the conclusion of Nixon's presidency, his successor attempted to cleanse the office of Commander in Chief, lending it renewed moral and political legitimacy. In particular, observers such as Baudrillard accounted for the phenomenology of Nixon's resignation by elaborating that it existed as several layers of simulations, each of which 'threatens the difference between true and false, between real and imaginary' (Baudrillard, 1983). Following this line of thought, these simulations are evident when interpretations of an event become so diverse that no one perspective will ever be able to reveal the nature of what took place. Baudrillard's assertions are instructive in relation to how post-truth can be considered a stage in the evolution of a radical subjectivity that has come to characterise the way political discourse functions. In one sense, the 'scandal' surrounding Watergate was typified by the multiplicity of perspectives about it, reflecting what Jean-Francois Lyotard terms the impossibility of a universal truth (Lyotard, 1967). With the mass-hysteria in the USA surrounding the resignation of a president, the public reaction was met with a politically convenient pardon, rather than a resolution about Nixon's guilt.

Within a post-truth context, Baurdillard's simulation theory accounts for how versions of history can be constructed so they are in line with a 'political principle' which is connected to the end goals of political groups (Baudrillard, 1995). The means of categorising events as products of post-truth is therefore not linked to historic occurrences, since it is in large part tied to the pragmatic reformulation of public history to reflect a political interest. Baudrillard's theorising gained currency after the Declaration of the War on Terror and was reinforced during the Second Gulf War in 2004, leading numerous authors to revise previous interpretations of the first conflict in the early 1990s. Ralph Keyes, for instance, observed that the political spectrum in America during the late 1980s splintered, setting the backdrop for what he dubbed as 'the Post-Truth Era', which began to come to fruition in the aftermath of the Second Gulf War (Keyes, 2004). Although he makes no reference to Tesich's definition, post-truth according to Keyes involves an exponential increase in lies being circulated and facts being deliberately misrepresented. This conclusion is reinforced by a comment made by Karl Rove to journalists, on their questioning about the parallels between the First and Second Gulf War, when he said, 'while you're studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again, creating other new realities' (Suskind, 2004). This rift

between an objective reality and subjective perspectives on an event, has been elaborated upon by Lee McIntyre in 'Post-Truth' in which he claims, such a distinction is, at worst, a 'complete rejection of facts' and at best, an ideology where individuals must 'pick a team rather than look at the evidence' (McIntyre, 2018). This convention represents a hallmark of post-truth, as a form of understanding that provokes division rather than socio-political cohesion.

What has made post-truth difficult to define (and for that matter, to address) is that it has only come to the forefront of public discussion in the last decade, as well as being ideologically specific. The evidence presented in this article, however, indicates that these developments can be directly traced to earlier decades. Most publications on post-truth from the United Kingdom cite the catalyst as the mass-misinformation surrounding the Brexit Referendum of 2016. Those from the USA by contrast, regularly cite the 2016 Presidential campaign (d'Acona, 2017; Ball, 2017; McIntyre, 2018). In Australia there has been more of an environmental focus, with John Connor attributing the genesis of post-truth to the cost-cutting agenda that the Liberal Party asserted was the reason for dissolving several environmental agencies after their 2013 election victory (Connor, 2014). These examples are perhaps debatable in terms of how post-truth has developed, since in all of the above cases the political processes were largely followed, even if the discourse within these events was not based on facts. A more appropriate case study of post-truth would be the declaration by the so-called ISIS of a Caliphate as a way to hark back to a more fundamentalist form of Islam, based in territories and belief systems that did not exist in

the past (Pomerantzev, 2016). Subsequently, the sovereignty of Iraq and Syria were undermined as a result of this organisation harking back to a 'golden age' to imbue themselves with the appearance of a great power in the region.

In an Australian context, Gough Whitlam's dismissal could constitute a post-truth case study. Its legacy has constantly been reworked with each generation, ranging from the focus on Indigenous land rights, the consequences for education and gender rights, as well as Australia's sovereignty being brought into question. In 2020, the High Court decision to finally allow Jenny Hocking's access to the papers between Sir John Kerr and Queen Elizabeth permits further historical and legal research on this case study, as an examination of these papers may yet reveal new interpretations about this era of Australian history. That being said, an overwhelming number of studies available on post-truth relate to the USA, Russia, Brazil and to a lesser extent, China. In teaching about post-truth, teachers will likely find that there is a dearth of resources from Australia.

Nevertheless, historical events mentioned here provide the background for understanding how current academic work attempts to situate post-truth within a history of ideas. Lee McIntyre for instance, asserts that post-truth is the logical conclusion of post-modernist tendencies to fragment notions of truth, which in turn shift authority away from experts (McIntyre, 2018). Others, such as Deborah Lipstadt, have linked post-truth with political groups weaponising history, which she argues is reflected in the rise of anti-Semitic messages used by political groups (Lipstadt and Koval, 2019). In this respect, her conclusions agree with those of McIntyre, in the sense that denialist claims – whether directed against global warming or the Holocaust – aim to revise history in the pursuit of a political goal, rather than a sense of truth. Yuval Noah Harari, while agreeing with Ralph Keyes' hypothesis that people lie more now than in previous eras of history, (Keyes, 2004) diverges by claiming that '… humans have always lived in an age of post-truth … whose power has depended on creating and believing fictions' (Harari, 2017). Other scholars define post-truth in behavioural terms, such as siding with arguments or perspectives presented to them, on the basis of emotional reactions rather than making judgements based on facts presented (Brown, 2016; Mair, 2017).

Post-truth developed as a result of events which had a traumatising impact on national memory. As such, citizens of democracies have generally become more united by their collective disillusionment or confusion, rather than a hope for the future or trust in political leaders and processes. Such sentiments are embodied in a general scepticism about the existence of truth. More recently, post-truth has been characterised by political pragmatism rather than any concern for facts. These changes appear to hark back to authoritarian forms of government that cultivated a public appearance of unity, strength and control, with the promise of safety for their supporters. However, post-truth can also be said to constitute a form of politicised revisionist history, but one which seeks to couch contemporary issues in terms of the distant past, thereby minimising existential threats such as pandemics, armed conflict and emerging environmental issues through the use of rhetoric.

Strategies in recognising bias and misinformation

While post-truth problematises the authenticity and veracity of knowledge, there are several suggestions for pedagogical approaches that may serve to combat it. These suggestions tend to fall into two categories – methodological and conceptual. Recent publications have usually taken the Center for Media Literacy's Five Key Questions for media inquiry as a starting point. They include explicit instruction on key analytical concepts that underpin forms of questioning. These range from taking the base assumption that all media stories are 'constructed' in the interests of justifying profit, points of view, or rules in messaging. In addition to these media concepts, it would be useful when teaching about post-truth to convey explicitly how the metanarrative of decline, for example, is constructed to suit specific political interests. A key element of engaging students is to show how they are empowered to construct their own understanding of the historical events through a process of inquiry. Such understanding can combat the disempowering historical narrative that is an essential part of post-truth. Furthermore, students need to be made aware of the short and long term trends within the subject they are investigating, so they are able to reflect on how individual and localised concerns form part of a macro-context.

In many cases, the methodological approach would involve practising source analysis using strategies such as OCMA PRU (origin, content, motive, audience, perspective, reliability, usefulness) for history source analysis, or similar. Such approaches are currently in wide use amongst history teachers, and they can be readily applied to media sources. Wayne Journell's (2017) study found that media literacy concepts generated interest from students addressing post-truth when they were introduced to it through teacher-modelling. Part of this modelling includes explaining the Centre for Media Literacy's concepts, then showing how they play a key role in fact checking, as conducted by sites such as Snopes and PolitiFact. To augment this approach, students would need to be provided with a media content to support their inquiry. They could be given opportunities to discuss charts that document the ideology and accuracy of media sources, such as Vanessa Otero's Interactive Media Bias Chart (2017) or AllSides Media Bias Chart (2020). In addition, the European Association of Viewers' Interests publish a separate chart that taxonomises 10 types of misinformation.

An awareness of these methods provides a checklist for students to undertake their own inquiry into a current issue involving how history is used and/or abused when required to serve a political end. Since nearly all of the materials available on post-truth in education emanate from the USA and Western Europe respectively, teachers in Australia will need to adapt resources to suit the cultural and political context of their content and particular pedagogical approach.

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