

Westerly Teaching Resource—Women’s Writing: Values and Perspectives

All tasks in this unit of work are intended for formative purposes only. They are designed to monitor learning and provide feedback, and to support teachers to inform their teaching and for students to inform their learning. All tasks can be adapted and expanded to become summative assessments but should not be used as summative assessments in their current format.

Rationale:

Using a selection of recent short fiction from *Westerly* magazine, this lesson has been prepared for students in Year 12. The scope of activities is easily customisable to suit group and individual skill levels. This lesson aims to develop students’ analytical reading skills, by guiding them through culturally informed interpretations of literary devices. This lesson focuses on women’s writing and feminist perspectives.

It is important to note that some texts in the magazine are not appropriate for students and all works should be reviewed by teachers prior to dissemination to ensure they are appropriate for the intended student group.

What will the materials cover?

All materials have been mapped to the WA Year 12 Literature syllabus. The lesson focuses on students interpreting ideas and arguments in a range of texts and contexts. The following texts have been selected from *Westerly*:

- [‘Neighbourhood Watch’ by Brooke Dunnell](#) (from *Westerly* 60.1)
- [‘Women in Fragments’ by Susan Midalia](#) (from *Westerly* 62.1)

Curriculum Links:

This lesson has been linked to the Year 12 Literature syllabus. Specific concepts have been highlighted.

Evaluate the ways in which literary texts represent culture and identity, including:

- how readers are influenced to respond to their own and others’ cultural experiences
- the power of language to represent ideas, events and people in particular ways, understanding that language is a cultural medium and that its meanings may vary according to context
- how representations of culture support or challenge various ideologies. Representations may reinforce habitual ways of thinking about the world or they may challenge popular ways of thinking, and in doing so, reshape values, attitudes and beliefs
- the ways in which authors represent Australian culture, place and identity both to Australians and the wider world.

Evaluate and reflect on how representations of culture and identity vary in different texts and forms of texts, including:

- the ways in which representations of the past allow a nation or culture to recognise itself
- how representations vary according to the discourse. Different groups of people use different terms to represent their ideas about the world and these different discourses (ways of thinking and speaking) offer particular representations of the world
- the impact of the use of literary conventions and stylistic techniques
- the ways in which language, structural and stylistic choices communicate values and attitudes and shed new light on familiar ideas
- how reading intertextually helps readers to understand and critique representations
- the influence of the reader's context, cultural assumptions, social position and gender.

Teaching Sequence:

0. Establishing Prior Knowledge

Students brainstorm their understanding of perspective: recall that texts can be constructed to position the reader to receive a certain ideological message. Students should be encouraged to discuss some of the reading perspectives that they're familiar with, for example Marxist or feminist perspectives.

1. Text Exploration

[‘Neighbourhood Watch’ by Brooke Dunnell](#)

[‘Women in Fragments’ by Susan Midalia](#)

Students should have access to printed or electronic copies of the short stories. Students should read both texts prior to the class, and read excerpts aloud.

2. Exploring Value, Status and Fear in ‘Neighbourhood Watch’

Initial Analysis

Who is the narrator of this story? What do we know about them? Create a table and plot the three characters' names down the side and write 'values' at the top. Identify the values of the main characters; the narrator, Rory and Lauren. How are these values constructed for the reader in the text using particular language features? Plot the values for each character next to their name and include an example from the text for each.

Further Analysis

Where do the narrator's opinions of Rory originate? Are they based on facts, opinions or influenced by bias? Or all three? Include proof from the story to support your answer.

Compare and contrast the narrator's reactions with how you felt reading the text. How is the reader implicated in an act of voyeurism?

Consider the identity of the narrator, including age, race, gender and socio-economic status. Create an imaginary Facebook profile/Instagram/Twitter account/LinkedIn profile/CV for the narrator. Now change one or two of these factors. How does that change the narrative and meaning of the story?

What ideas does the narrator bring to the story? How has the narrator's values and attitudes become apparent?

Going Deeper

Dunnell builds suspense throughout the text. What narrative techniques are employed to achieve this?

What is the relationship between the descriptions of cars, car spaces and their owners? How is this supported by figurative language?

3. Feminism and Body Issues in 'Women in Fragments'

Initial Analysis

The text offers five 'fragments' of different women. Create a map of the five different women in the story. Name each woman based on the words used to describe her in the story. In each fragment identify a fact, an opinion and an example of bias and write this on your map. Explain what you think this means about the woman and what techniques have been used in the text to create these images of the women.

Choose a question for Further Analysis

On your map, write how these techniques influence your reading of the text and your understanding of the values and attitudes presented.

OR

Describe and compare the different perspectives each fragment presents. Include your own opinion on, and justification for, each perspective.

Going Deeper

Consider what Feminism means to you. Do you see feminism as represented in the text? Why or why not? Write your own definition of feminism on your map and include one – two sentences explaining why or why not you believe feminism is represented in the story.