

**THE STUDY OF ENGLISH LITERARY TEXTS  
IN A MONOCULTURAL SECONDARY  
SCHOOL CONTEXT AND STUDENTS'  
ATTITUDES TO THE 'CULTURAL OTHER'**

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## Errata

Page, Paragraph, Line	As In Original	Correction
P4, 6 <sup>th</sup> line from bottom	'taken granted'	taken for granted
P5, 2 <sup>nd</sup> line from bottom	'conversant'	conversant,
P7, line 11 from top	'texts,'	texts
P7, line 15 from top	'far'	far,
P8, line 4 from top	'different than'	different from
P9, line 2 from bottom	'remain for new arrivals'	remain, for new arrivals,
P11, line 7 from top	'cultural and marginalized other'	cultural and/or marginalized other
P12, para. 2, line 11 from top	'Vygotsky,'	Vygotsky
P19, line 6 from top	'only,'	only
P22, line 6 from top	'speak'	speaking
P22, line 6 from top	'visibly different'	visibly different,
P23, line 1 from top	'cultural,'	cultural
P35, line 3 from top	'related'	is related
P35, line 1 from bottom	'conflict'	conflicts
P36, line 6 from top	'across two cultures'	across two different cultures
P40, para. 1, last sentence	'at secondary level'	at the secondary level
P66, para. 1, last word	'film'	film.
P78, line 3 from top	'the data'	the data,
P79, para. 2, line 3	'In Australia'	In Australia,
P80, para 3.3, line 4 from bottom	'students,'	students
P87, last line of page	'Aboriginal people'	Aboriginal people,
P87, last word on page	'Chapter'	Chapter.
P270, para. 2, last two sentences replaced	<b>Replacement</b>	
	This approach has direct application to the recent Australian Curriculum developments which promote the study of literary texts as a means of learning about other cultures and developing intercultural understanding.	

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to investigate how far the study of English literary texts, focused on ‘cultural or marginalised others’, could provide a substitute in imagination for the students’ lack of actual experience with the ‘cultural other’ and lead to a positive change in their understanding and attitudes. The students were from an Independent College in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, South Australia, where the predominance of Anglo-Australian culture made it difficult for the students to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds. Three main theorists were used to underpin the study and to analyse the data: Florian Znaniecki’s *humanistic* sociological concepts of group values and individual attitudes; Louise Rosenblatt’s educational theory of *aesthetic reading* and *transactional experience* emphasizing what should transpire between reader and the literary text; and Lev Vygotsky’s psychological theory of the *imaginational* processes in ‘higher mental development’. Over four years, the researcher, who was also the teacher, used an English classroom as the field of observation and investigation of students’ thoughts and feelings about ‘cultural others’. The literary texts studied as part of the English curriculum included those specifically chosen for their portrayal of themes related to people who were culturally different than the students. Four small scale qualitative studies were carried out at four different year levels. Prior to the study of selected texts in Years Nine and Ten, classes were asked to explain in writing what they knew and felt about the cultural group concerned. After study of the texts was completed, the students gave written responses to questions about the meaning and understanding of the text. The in-depth linguistic analysis of the students’ written comments, to the open ended questions, revealed what understanding and positivity of attitudes the students had toward people from other cultures before and after the study of

the literary texts. In the Year Nine study, the topic of investigation concerned Aboriginal people in Australia and the Year Ten topic was on Italian immigrants in Australia post World War Two. For Year Eleven, the teacher/researcher provided a 'memoir' on the dialectical discussions with the students on two World War One texts: one written by a German soldier and the other a poem written by a British soldier. In Year Twelve, when the students chose their own texts for study, they responded to four final evaluating questions concerning what values they had gained from their years of studying English literary texts. Overall, these small scale studies demonstrated that the aesthetic study of literary texts over four years could stimulate the students' higher mental processes of imagination. In general, participants emerged with a deepened understanding and greater positive attitudes toward the 'cultural other'. In their own minds, the students' monocultural experiences had been extended through the study of literary texts, although these attitudes were not yet tested by actual contact with multicultural 'others' in Australia.

## DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Mary Vlahakis and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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.....  
Mary Vlahakis  
2012

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## **DEDICATION**

To my husband Emmanuel for his constant  
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throughout my University and Post Graduate  
studies.