

17th June

LATE SUMMER
LONDON ASSOCIATION FOR
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

CONFERENCE

*What Branches
Grow?*

*Joys and
challenges in
the new GCSE
specification*

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.

Lines 19-26
The Waste Land by T.S. Eliot

Part one of T.S. Eliot's masterpiece '*The Waste Land*' focuses on themes of disillusionment and despair; feelings echoed by many teachers when the challenges of the new GCSE specification were presented in 2015. Eliot's characters are continuously searching for an audience, only to be met with ghosts; many sections are confusing and short and this can be likened to the way some teachers feel about the new specification – they've been left on their own to try and generate growth in a barren land. The new specification has presented teachers with several different challenges: *how can we make 19th century texts engaging and relevant for our classes? How can we support students in writing both creatively and analytically to a high level? How can we find time to teach long, full length texts and ensure that students know how to write about them effectively? How can we incorporate historical context into lessons without 'teaching history'?*

There certainly have been times over recent years when remaining optimistic has seemed beyond challenging, especially when facing ever-more reductive versions of English and of learning. However, having had time to reflect on the almost-complete first cycle of the syllabus, it has been interesting to note that where once there were challenges, many teachers have actually found joys. That is what we hope to share with you today.

This conference is dedicated to finding **joys** in the new specification; *the 'branches that grow'*, if you will. Today we want to celebrate potential and the share ways of approaching **challenges** to ensure that English teachers remain optimistic about their role in this transitional climate. The keynote and the workshops have been put together with these aims in mind.



Conference Programme

9.30am: Coffee and registration

**10.00am: Keynote: Andrew McCallum –
'How We Learn in English'**

11.00am: Workshop 1

(Conference participants to choose one workshop and a reserve option – see following pages.)

12.00pm: Coffee break

12.15pm: Workshop 2

(Conference participants to choose one workshop and a reserve option – see following pages.)

1.15pm: Closing remarks and marketplace

1.45pm: Lunch

Keynote: Andrew McCallum, EMC - *How we learn in English and how it applies to GCSEs*

'To hit the target, sometimes you must aim away from the target.'

There is a temptation, when approaching the new GCSEs, to teach very specifically to the specified assessment objectives. But what are the drawbacks of such a narrow approach? And is there a better way that helps students to become more accomplished, independent and confident readers and writers?

This presentation looks at how students learn in English, with a particular focus on language. It argues that placing theories of language learning at the heart of classroom practice enables a more holistic, well-rounded and enjoyable experience of the subject for students and teachers alike, one which does not have to relate everything back to a narrow set of assessment objectives.

Andrew McCallum is the Director of the English and Media Centre (EMC). Previously he worked as a PGCE tutor and, for 15 years, as a classroom teacher in London schools. He is author and co-author of several EMC publications, as well as *Creativity and Learning in Secondary English*, published by Routledge.

Workshop 1

(11.00—12.00)

A. African Non-Fiction

Joanna Brown and colleagues, Royal African Society

Using texts ranging from African slave narratives to Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists*, this workshop explores innovative ways of using African non-fiction texts to prepare for Language Paper 2. Rich in language and powerful in voice, these texts are accessible and exciting: crucially, they fill a gap left in a curriculum overly reliant on European authors and perspectives, and give a platform to African voices old and new. With a focus on voice, this workshop offers the chance to work collaboratively with peers to explore how these texts 'speak' to your students. We will explore the 'conversations' that arise from different pairings of texts and design exercises and activities to develop skills in language analysis, comparing and contrasting ideas and perspectives, evaluating texts critically and developing the writing 'voice'.

B. Explorations in Creative Reading

Kate Oliver, EMC

This workshop will offer a short GCSE teaching sequence with tried-and-tested classroom ideas to help students develop skills for reading fiction, with a particular focus on structure and critical evaluation. The strategies are designed for AQA Paper 1 but would be adaptable to other specifications.

C. Rehearsal room approaches to contemporary plays

Jane Ball, National Theatre

In this workshop, National Theatre practitioners will introduce rehearsal room techniques that can be used to help unlock contemporary drama texts for your students. There will be opportunities to discuss how these exercises can be adapted to suit different groups of students and different texts in the classroom. The session will explore a selection of exercises with writing, discussion and performance outcomes, based on a selection of set texts studied at GCSE including 'DNA' and 'An Inspector Calls'.

D. Nineteenth-century Context

Alison Croasdale, Bishop Challoner School

This workshop will be exploring how historic images and texts can bring context alive for students. The focus will be on how context can improve the quality of student writing, but also how an understanding of key issues in science, faith and politics in the 19th century can add a new dimension to a play or novel.

Workshop 2

(12.15—1.15)

E. *Shakespeareances in the classroom* **Galia Admoni, Friern Barnet School**

This workshop will offer a chance for teachers to reflect on the challenges we face in preparing students for studying a whole Shakespeare text. The session aims are to examine where there might be value to be found in teaching Shakespeare, particularly through the intellectual challenge his work presents. Looking in detail at a Macbeth SoW, teachers will be offered the opportunity to see how tasks can be created to highlight the importance in allowing for, and encouraging, students' individual interpretations of his works. The session will provide practical tasks and resources that teachers can use in their own lessons, should they wish to in the future.

F. *Authentic Writing* **Diane Samuels, playwright and writer**

This workshop is an opportunity to engage in practical exercises that enable all levels of writers to tune into their unlimited personal imagination and experience to write from heart and mind together. We will explore different ways of liberating expression to generate writing on any theme that is presented and approach the blank page as a creative space rather than daunting block. The focus will be on tapping into personal voice to find an authentic sense of authorship even for designated tasks. We'll also take a look at the processes of working through drafts from different kinds of "raw" writing to editing and trusting the process of "emergence" by which the writing is discovered, revealed and shaped in a way that's true to what needs to be expressed. This workshop will open up new ways of approaching writing and expanding outlook.

G. *Poetry Please* **Myfanwy Marshall & Gemma Dye, Twyford High School**

We're often guilty of feature spotting, form spotting and spading on the often erroneous context when it comes to teaching the poetry for GCSE. This workshop aims to give you some approaches to teaching the anthology clusters and unseen poems with a focus on personal response and discussion. We'll take you through some classroom ideas for introducing the poems, during teaching and revision. The aim is to help students enjoy and understand poetry as a starting point for writing about them. Both Myfanwy and Gemma have done their MA in English teaching and have been trained as markers by AQA.

H. *'I would call these lessons A Waste of Time': Reading, identity and culture in the GCSE modern text* **Mehrunissa Shah, Preston Manor School**

It is Rudge that states 'You've force-fed us the facts; now we're in the process of running around acquiring flavour' in response to his education at school, in Alan Bennett's History Boys. This session will look at the unexpected and diverse responses of students to texts that may not seem to appeal to the life experiences that are typical of students in diverse London classrooms. There will be an opportunity to explore the approaches to reading race and identity with relation to the modern text component of the reformed GCSE. What flavour can teachers offer on the course? What forms of knowledge do students draw on to make sense of the texts that they encounter? What can be celebrated in those lessons that some may dismiss as 'a waste of time'?

THE WASTE LAND

By T. S. ELIOT

T.S. Eliot

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain ; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in the sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, " Marie,
Marie, hold on tight." And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

Resources Market Place:

This year we are inviting LATE conference attendees to participate in a resource sharing marketplace. All you need to do is bring a paper resource that you're happy to share. On the day, we'll display the resources and you'll be free to take a new one home with you!



