UNIT 2
ME, MYSELF AND I

The BIG question
How does language influence a person’s identity?

Key learnings
- How does language influence teenage identities?
- How do text structures and language features vary according to the text?
- How do names affect the way we view people and characters?
- How are characters in fiction named and introduced?
- How does lost or hidden language affect identity?

Key knowledge, understanding and skills
Students will:
- examine names and labels in fiction and non-fiction
- read a news article about teenage language
- explore ‘lost’ language in an autobiography
- learn how to write dialogue in a story.
‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose 
By any other name would smell as sweet.’
— from Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare

‘My name has been a source of angst my entire life.’
— Kurleigh Martin

‘I hated my parents for what they named me up until I was a teenager, but then I just became comfortable with it.’
— Ftango Molasses

‘We are always going to be influenced by America… I watched the word bum go out and butt come in. And part of me says, oh that’s a shame, but Aussie boys are still Aussie boys.’
— Bryan Brown, Australian actor

arvo
banana bender
budgie smugglers
crook
deadly
fair dinkum
larrikin
sickie
walkabout
— Australian slang

‘Yolngu language… gives us strength; language is our identity, who we are. Yolngu language gives us pride.’
— Yalmay Yunupingu, Aboriginal teacher

me pronoun the personal pronoun used, usually after a verb or preposition, by a speaker to refer to himself or herself: She passed me in the street. / Give it to me.
myself pronoun 1 the reflexive form of I: I cut myself. 2 a form of me or I used for emphasis: I did it myself. 3 your normal or proper self: I don’t feel myself today.
I pronoun the personal pronoun used by a speaker to refer to himself or herself: I heard that.
— Macquarie Dictionary

EXCELSIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Strive to Achieve
What do we mean by ‘language influencing identity’?

‘Hi, who are you?’ If a new acquaintance asks you this question, you will most likely start by giving your name, which is one clue to your identity. If you were born in Australia, you will probably tell the listener your first or given name, because individuality is important in Australia. If you are being more formal, you may give your surname, or family name, which may tell your listener where your ancestors came from — if he or she is very knowledgeable! What your name means and how much it says about you is something you possibly don’t think about much. But what if someone pronounces your name incorrectly or misspells it? How annoyed do you get?

Imagine now that you tell your new acquaintance a bit more about yourself. Regardless of what you say, one thing that identifies you is the way you say it. Unless you deliberately try to speak differently, you will use the vocabulary and grammar of a teenager in the early twenty-first century. Some people may criticise you for that, but belonging to the teenage community is part of who you are, part of your identity.

Now try to imagine that shame or fear or moving to a different country has prevented you from using your first language and your name. Imagine starting all over again, with a new name and a new language. Suddenly, your identity would become a lot more complicated.

Getting started

1 Think and say why:
   a Which is your favourite quotation on the opposite page? Can you explain why?
   b Do you know the meanings of all the Australian slang expressions in the bottom left box? Which ones don’t you know?
   c Do you feel the same about the English language as Yalmay Yunupingu feels about his language, Yolngu?
   d There are two quotes opposite by people commenting on their names. How do you feel about your name?
   e Look at the school motto opposite. Do you prefer it to your school motto? Explain.
   f Which photos suggest the idea of two cultures rolled into one identity? Explain.

2 Find out: Did you know these facts about Cathy Freeman? (pictured centre right)
   ● She won the 400-metre sprint at the Sydney Olympics in 2000.
   ● The fastest time recorded by a woman in the 400 metres is 47.60 seconds.
   ● At the 1994 Commonwealth Games, after winning the 400-metre sprint, Cathy Freeman carried the Aboriginal and Australian flags. People criticised her for this, saying she should not have two identities.
   What else can you find out about Cathy Freeman? See if you can find out what her middle names are and what they mean.

3 Write: Start keeping a language diary, almost as if you’re learning English for the first time. Jot down:
   ● things that people say that sound odd or funny
   ● the jargon of the different groups within your school
   ● conversations you hear on public transport
   ● expressions you don’t use yourself
   ● funny things that you and your family say that other people don’t understand
   ● the language of advertising.

Your language diary will be needed in an assessment task at the end of the unit.
How do names affect our view of people and characters?

Names are an important part of language. We like naming things so much that we give names to our stuffed toys, houses, cars, boats and all sorts of lifeless objects — things that we love and that are part of who we are.

Does it matter what your name is and does it affect the way you think about things? Fiction writers choose character names very deliberately. If you were creating an action hero, you would be more likely to call him Jack Bronson than Cecil Greebling. If you were creating a female character who was smart, attractive and strong, would you call her Tara Steele or Daphne Blenkinsop? Names matter. Parents spend hours trying to find the perfect baby name for their child — perhaps because they believe that names shape character.

In non-fiction, a writer will usually keep the names of the real people, but not always. In some autobiographies, if the events described are too awful, the author might change the names or use first names only.

As a way of examining the effect of names, let’s look at an autobiographical work in which real names are used. The following extract is from the preface of Chinese Cinderella, in which the author explains why she wrote the book and how people are named in Chinese culture.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

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**READY TO READ …**

- Look at the title of the extract below, the author’s name, the photograph and the first sentence of the extract. What do these tell you about the text you are about to read?
- Scan the text for unfamiliar words that you don’t know and check them in a dictionary.
- Discuss with a partner what you know already about the fairy story of Cinderella. Make some predictions about what the author of Chinese Cinderella, Adeline Yen Mah, might have in common with Cinderella.

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**from Chinese Cinderella**

**by Adeline Yen Mah**

**Preface**

Chinese Cinderella is my autobiography. It was difficult and painful to write but I felt compelled to do so. Though mine is but a simple personal tale of my childhood, please do not underestimate the power of such stories. In one way or another, every one of us has been shaped by the stories we have read and absorbed in the past. All stories, including fairy tales, present elemental truths, which can sometimes permeate your inner life and become part of you.
The fact that this story is true may hold special appeal. Today the world is a very different place. Though many Chinese parents still prefer sons, daughters are not so much despised. But the essential things have not changed. It is still important to be truthful and loyal, to do the best you can, to make the most of your talents, to be happy with the simple things in life, and to believe deep down that you will ultimately triumph if you try hard enough to prove your worth.

To those who were neglected and unloved as children, I have a particular message. In spite of what your abusers would have had you believe, please be convinced that each of you has within you something precious and unique. *Chinese Cinderella* is dedicated to you with the fervent wish that you will persist in trying to do your best in the face of hopelessness; to have faith that in the end your spirit will prevail; to transcend your traumas and transform them into a source of courage, creativity and compassion.

**Author’s note**

*Names*

In Chinese families, a child is called by many names.

1. My father’s surname is Yen (嚴). My siblings and I inherited his surname of Yen (嚴). Chinese surnames come at the beginning of a person’s name.

2. At birth, a baby is given a name by his or her parents. My given name is Jun-ling. Since my surname comes first, my Chinese name is Yen Jun-ling (嚴君玲).

3. At home, a child is called by a name dependent on the order of his or her birth. The oldest daughter is called Big Sister, the second daughter Second Sister and so on. There are separate Chinese words for older sister (jie 姐) and younger sister (mei 妹); older brother (ge 哥) and younger brother (di 弟). Since I was the fifth child in my family, my name at home was Fifth Younger Sister (Wu Mei 五妹). However, my younger siblings called me Wu Jie (五姐), which means Fifth Older Sister.

4. When the older generation calls me Wu Mei (五妹) the word mei takes on the meaning of ‘daughter’. Wu Mei (五妹) now means Fifth Daughter.

5. The same goes for the word ‘di’. Er Di (二弟) can mean Second Younger Brother or Second Son.

6. Our stepmother gave us European names when she married my father. When my brothers and I attended schools in Hong Kong and London where English was the main language, my name became Adeline Yen.

7. After I married, I adopted my Chinese American husband Bob Mah’s last name and my name is now Adeline Yen Mah.

8. Big Sister’s (大姐) name is Lydia, Big Brother’s (大哥) is Gregory, Second Brother’s (二哥) is Edgar, Third Brother’s (三哥) is James. Fourth Younger Brother’s name (四弟) is Franklin. Little Sister’s name (小妹) is Susan.
Activities …

UNDERSTANDING the purpose of a preface

Getting started
1. Would the preface and author’s note of *Chinese Cinderella* come at the start of the book or at the end of it? Explain.
2. The rest of *Chinese Cinderella* is an autobiography. How do you think it will differ from this preface and author’s note?
3. Why do you think the author numbered the paragraphs in her author’s note? Look at the possible reasons listed below. Tick those you think are correct and put a cross against those you think are not likely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Correct/Notlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The author is good at maths.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information is fairly complicated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information is a series of steps to follow, like a recipe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking information into smaller pieces makes it easier to follow.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number 8 is very lucky in Chinese.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. From what the author says in the preface, do you think she had a happy or unhappy childhood? List all the words that give you clues.
5. Read the topic sentence of each of the paragraphs in the preface, and then read the rest of the paragraph. How well did the topic sentence outline what was going to follow? If 5 is extremely well and 1 is very poorly, rate the topic sentence out of 5. Do the same for the following two paragraphs.

Working through
6. Read the Literacy link on this page.
   a. In the author’s note for *Chinese Cinderella*, would you have used bullets or numbers? Explain.
   b. Would you use a bulleted or numbered list if you were writing a short story or novel? Explain.
7. Do you think all of Adeline Yen Mah’s family members would see things the same way as she does? Would they tell the same story? Explain.
8. The author has included the Chinese characters in the author’s note, even though most readers won’t be able to read them. Why do you think she might have done this?
9. How many names has the author been known by? List them.
10. How many meanings does the author give for the name Wu Mei?

Going further
11. In a small group, look at the following words in the preface:

| compelled | elemental | permeate | ultimately | fervent | transcend |

Come up with words or phrases that you could replace these with. Refer to a dictionary if you need to. Decide among yourselves what word or phrase is the closest synonym for each of these, and check that the sentence still makes sense. (Refer to the Language link on synonyms on page 7 in Unit 1 if you need to.)

ANALYSING names and how they affect us

Getting started
12. What would your name be in your family if you were named like the Chinese author? First Sister? Second Son? How would you feel about this?
If you had to change your given name, what name would you choose? Do you think your current name suits your personality? Explain.

In the author’s note, names such as Big Sister are given initial capital letters. Would you normally do this in English? (Refer to the Wordsmith on the following page.) How do the capital letters change the name?

Working through

If your family name came before your personal name, as it does in Chinese, do you think this would change the way you think about yourself? Explain.

Going further

From what you have read about Chinese names, what do you think might be considered more important in Chinese society: individualism or the family? Explain. How do you think this compares with modern Australia?

RESPONDING to ideas about names and labels

Getting started

In small groups, discuss the use of nicknames.

a If you have a nickname within your family, how do you feel about it? Is it used affectionately or insultingly?

b Do you have a nickname that only a certain group of people uses? What would you think if someone from a different group called you by that name?

c Share one of your nicknames with the class (if you feel comfortable doing so) and tell an anecdote of how you ended up with that nickname.

In the book Chinese Cinderella, Adeline Yen Mah is labelled as being bad luck by much of her family because her mother died shortly after she was born. Another label we often hear people use these days is loser. In the same group in which you discussed question 15, discuss labels.

a Talk about some of the labels that you use at school for different ‘types’ of people, such as geeks. See if you can come up with a list of five such labels.

b When we label someone, are we stereotyping them? (To stereotype someone is to create an oversimplified image of a person or group.)

c Does labelling yourself as part of a group make you feel safe and comfortable or boxed in?

Working through

Still in your group, find another way of describing the people you discussed in question 18(a). Avoid being negative or critical, and pick out their strong points. Create a table like the one below, in which one example is shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geeks</td>
<td>People who are very interested in a range of indoor activities, such as computer games and technology. They are often good at maths and can sometimes be a good source of sci-fi and Doctor Who DVDs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Going further

Now discuss whether you think the descriptions fit every person who falls into the labelled category. How difficult did you find it to come up with a description that everyone agreed on?
Wordsmith ...  

USING NOUNS

A noun is a part of speech or word class that names things such as objects, people, places, ideas and feelings. Nouns can be divided further into common and proper nouns.

Common nouns name things that are general rather than specific, such as dog, refrigerator, car, school, child and nation. They do not need to have an initial capital letter unless they begin a sentence. One way of testing whether something is a common noun is to see if you can put an article before it: a car, the school. Also, can you make it plural, as in refrigerators, children? There are some exceptions, but these are quite good tests.

In contrast, proper nouns name specific things, such as Australia, Daniel and Perth. These are typical proper nouns because we cannot normally put an article before them or make them plural; we don’t say the Australia, a Daniel or Perths. Proper nouns are sometimes called proper names, especially when they are the names of people or when they contain more than one word.

Geographical names are proper nouns and therefore get capitalised: Coral Sea, Kilimanjaro, Cape York. Specific building and structure names are proper nouns too: Sydney Harbour Bridge, Empire State Building.

However, it’s not always so straightforward. Days of the week, months and holidays are regarded as proper nouns but seasons are not, so we write Monday, June and Boxing Day but winter and spring.

Languages and religions are proper nouns, so they too get initial capital letters: French, Vietnamese, Judaism, Buddhism.

The table below helps to show how common nouns are general names, whereas proper nouns are specific:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common noun</th>
<th>Proper noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>Fido</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refrigerator</td>
<td>Kelvinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>Wattle Valley High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
<td>Camille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sea</td>
<td>Coral Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop</td>
<td>Myer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most grammar books will tell you that proper nouns always start with a capital letter, but some brand names and companies have capital and lowercase letters in all sorts of odd places. This feature is known as camel case or camel caps, and examples include iPod, eBay, MySpace and YouTube. It is thought that this became common in the 1970s when computer programmers had to close up spaces between words, making them hard to read. Adding a capital letter in the middle of the word helped to prevent it being misread.
When you have to write about a brand or company, you can choose to ignore the way it capitalises its name but would your audience recognise iPod? Besides, camel case has been around a long time, even if it was not called that: many surnames such as McDonald and DiCaprio go back centuries.

If you are in doubt about the camel caps in a brand name, check it on the internet. Watch out for words like mum and dad that can be both common nouns and proper nouns. Look at these examples:

- *My mum says my dad is always leaving his clothes on the floor.*
- *‘That’s not fair, Dad!’ I said. ‘You know Mum told me I could go!’*

In the first sentence, *mum* and *dad* are being used in a general sense, with the word *my* singling out the speaker’s mum and dad from all the other mums and dads. In the second sentence though, *Mum* and *Dad* are being used as proper names. Because we don’t call a parent by his or her given name, we have to say *Mum* or *Dad* instead.

**OVER TO YOU …**

1. Look at the images at right and write down as many proper names associated with them as possible. Then write down five common nouns associated with each image.

2. Give the proper names of three people you admire and then give some common nouns that tell us what they are (for example, *Homer Simpson*: cartoon character, father, safety inspector).

3. Imagine you were allowed to own a pet giraffe, a robot and a shop of your choice. (Would your shop sell chocolate, clothes, sporting goods or something else?) Now decide what proper names you would give your giraffe, robot and shop. Explain the reasons for each of your choices. Create a sign for your shop, using Word art and drawing tools.

**How are characters in fiction named and introduced?**

When a fiction author writes in the third person (he/she/they), introducing characters is not too difficult. Characters can often be named and introduced in the first lines of the book:

*There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it.*

(*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis)

However, when the story is told in the first person, this makes introducing the narrator a little different. The narrator sometimes just states his or her name in the first paragraph (*‘Call me Ishmael!’ is the first sentence of Moby Dick*), but that is not necessarily the most interesting thing about the character.
from Does My Head Look Big in This?  
by Randa Abdel-Fattah

It hit me when I was power-walking on the treadmill at home, watching a *Friends* rerun for only about the ninetieth time.

It’s that scene when Jennifer Aniston is dressed in a hideous bridesmaid’s outfit at her ex’s wedding. Everyone is making fun of her and she just wants to run away and hide, but then she suddenly gets the guts to jump on stage and sing some song called ‘Copacabana’, whatever that means. I’m telling you, this rush of absolute power and conviction surged through me. I pressed the emergency stop button on the treadmill and stood in my Adidas shorts and Winnie-the-Pooh T-shirt, utterly captivated by the scene. It was like stepping out of one room, closing the door behind me, and stepping into another. One minute it was the last thing on my mind. The next minute this courage flowed through me and it just felt unbelievably right.

I was ready to wear the hijab.

That’s right, Rachel from *Friends* inspired me. The sheiks will be holding emergency conferences…

I can’t sleep from stressing about whether I’ve got the guts to do it.

To wear the hijab, the head-scarf, full-time. ‘Full-timers’ are what my Muslim friends and I call girls who wear the hijab all the time, which basically means wearing it whenever you’re in the presence of males who
aren’t immediate family. ‘Part-timers’ like me wear the hijab as part of our school uniform at an Islamic school or when we go to the mosque or maybe even when we’re having a bad hair day.

I’ve got four days left of my school holidays. Four days to decide whether I’m going to actually start only my third term at McCleans Grammar School as a full-timer. You should know that right now the thought of stepping into my home room with the hijab on is making my nostril hair stand on edge.

At this stage you should probably also know that my name is Amal Mohamed Nasrullah Abdel-Hakim. You can thank my father, paternal grandfather, and paternal great-grandfather for that one. The teachers labelled me slow in preschool because I was the last child to learn how to spell her name.

My dad’s a doctor and my mum’s a dentist. Two major nerds who fell in love during their hibernations in Monash University medical library. They were both born in Bethlehem, but there are fifty-two years of Australian citizenship between them.

My dad’s name is Mohamed. He drives a metallic-red convertible because he’s under the misguided delusion that he’s still young and cool. He fails to remember that he has a receding hairline and has Italian opera or Palestinian folk songs blasting from his car stereo system. My mum’s name is Jamila, which means beautiful in Arabic. She’s loud and energetic, loves to laugh, and is neurotically clean.

We live in Camberwell, one of Melbourne’s trendy suburbs... We moved here last year because my dad started working in a clinic in a nearby suburb... Before that we lived in Donvale, a very leafy, hilly suburb with lots of acreages and owls hooting at night. There were lots more Aussies with ethnic backgrounds there, so being a Muslim family wasn’t such a big deal. In Donvale our street was a cocktail. There were the Chongs, the Papadopoulouses, the Wilsons, the Slaviks, the Xiangs and us, the Abdel-Hakims...

Our street in Camberwell is different. We’ve got the Taylors, the Johns and Mrs Vaselli. Wouldn’t have a clue who the rest are. Everybody pretty much keeps to themselves.

I’m an Australian-Muslim-Palestinian. That means I was born an Aussie and whacked with some bloody confusing identity hyphens.
Activities . . .

UNDERSTANDING how characters can be introduced in fiction

Getting started
1 What does the narrator tell us about in the first and second paragraphs? Answer the questions who, where and what for each piece of information the narrator gives us.
2 In which paragraph does the narrator tell us her name?
3 How many parts are there to Amal's whole name?
4 a What is the decision Amal has reached?
   b What aspect of the Friends episode inspired her?
   c Why did it inspire her?
5 How is she feeling about her decision?

Working through
6 In what way did Amal's teachers 'label' her in primary school? What did this have to do with her name?
7 Do you think Amal's name helps her to blend in at McCleans Grammar School? Explain.
8 What comes first: a brief description of Amal's parents or their names?

Going further
9 Why do you think Amal says that 'the sheiks will be holding emergency conferences'?
10 Refer to the Wordsmith in Unit 1, page 15, on similes and analogies. What analogy does Amal use to describe her decision to wear the hijab?

ANALYSING the introduction of characters in fiction

Getting started
11 Does Amal name any of her friends in this extract?
12 a What labels do Amal and her friends use to describe themselves?
   b What do these nouns normally mean?
   c What do they mean when she and her friends use them?
13 What label does Amal use to describe her parents?
14 From the way she talks about them, do you think Amal:
   a does not like her parents much and is critical of them
   b loves her parents but sees their imperfections
   c finds her parents amusing but cannot wait to leave home?
   Find evidence to support your answer.

Working through
15 With a partner:
   a Discuss what you think Amal means when she says she's been 'whacked with . . . confusing identity hyphens'?
   b What other examples of hyphens can you find in the extract?
   c If you have a long name like Amal's, explain how you feel about it. If you have a short name, would you prefer something longer and more interesting?
   Explain.
16 If you have not read the rest of Does My Head Look Big in This?, create a table like the one below using a ruler or the ‘Insert table’ function of Word. Then list all the people the narrator introduces in this extract, including herself.

- If the narrator gives us their name, include it.
- If she gives us only a common noun (such as friends), include that instead.
- In the middle column, list up to three important details she tells us about the person or people — if any.
- Then try to predict whether we will learn more about that person or people later in the book.

### Characters/families introduced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper name or common noun?</th>
<th>Things the narrator tells us about them</th>
<th>Predict: will they appear later in the book?</th>
<th>Why or why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CREATING a character: yourself**

**Getting started**

17 Write three or four paragraphs about yourself, as if you are starting a story about your life. Start out by giving your name and then introduce your family and where you live. Think about what things you want to mention and what you want to leave out.

**Working through**

18 Do the same as in question 17 but try to imitate the style of writing of Randa Abdel-Fattah, the author of Does My Head Look Big in This?

- Think about whether you will give your name in the first paragraph or later.
- Will you give an explanation of what your name means or why your parents chose it?
- Use humour, if you can, to help draw the reader in. Try being very honest and a little self-deprecating (modest, self-critical). For help on humour, refer to Unit 7.
- Will you mention where you are from or where you live?

**Going further**

19 Present your personal character study to the class as a monologue or as if you were a stand-up comedian. Make use of metaphors and other figurative language.

**My view . . .**

There’s an old saying that ‘sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me’. Do you think this saying is talking about proper names or about ‘labels’ such as loser and stupid? Do you think the saying is true? There is also a saying that ‘names shape destiny’. Do you agree? Or do you think that what you do is more important than what your name is?
2.2 THE TEENAGE COMMUNITY

How does language influence teenage identities?

‘Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work.’
Carl Sandburg, American writer

As a teenager, you have your own slang. You use it with your friends as a way of showing that you are part of a particular group — young people. It probably feels comfortable and easy to use, like a favourite pair of old ugg boots. You know that your friends are not going to correct the way you speak, telling you not to say like, youse or could of. By using your own particular language, you also exclude people from your peer group. These ‘outsiders’ may be older people or they may be young but unfamiliar with the slang you use. You might not mean to exclude them, but that is sometimes the effect.

What is slang exactly? Slang is any language that differs from standard speech or writing. It may be different in its vocabulary or grammar. It is language that is more informal than Standard Australian English, and some people may regard it as inferior.

LANGUAGE link
Standard Australian English

If slang is ‘non-standard English’, what is Standard Australian English? The Macquarie Dictionary says it is ‘the form of Australian English that conforms to … appropriate usages for serious writing’.

But maybe the definition that will help you the most comes from Susan Butler, who is the Publisher at the Macquarie Dictionary. She says: ‘My final definition of Standard Australian English is … that it is the English that you produce when you avoid all the things that your teachers will mark as wrong, wrong, wrong’.

The article opposite is about teenagers and the slang they use. You will recognise most of the slang, but there will be one or two expressions that you have never heard of.

Before you read the article, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

READY TO READ …

Look at the photograph and caption that appears with the article.
- Do you think the girls in the photo will be mentioned in the article?
- What age are the girls?
- Read the bold paragraph that sums up the article. What audience do you think the article is aimed at: older people aged over 30 or people your age?
- Do you think you already know something about this topic?
- What do you think the headline means?
- Take it in turns to read the article aloud with a partner. Discuss any words or phrases that you don’t immediately understand. Between you, work out what they mean. Use dictionaries and the annotations to help you.
A way with words: year 12 girls, from left to right, Liz Clarke, Angela Cooper, Amanda Merrett, Samantha Galea, Bianca Bondin and Maddie Ryan

So to, like, speak

by Alana Rosenbaum

You know what ‘sweet’ means, and perhaps even ‘rad’. But what to make of ‘LOL’, the ‘plastics’ and things that are so ‘Gary’? Alana Rosenbaum talks to teenage girls about a language that’s all their own.

It had only been an interstate move from Darwin to Melbourne, but at her new school Amanda Merrett found herself immersed in an entirely new language.

Much of the slang doing the rounds of Box Hill Secondary College was incomprehensible, and Amanda would occasionally baffle her peers with Darwin lingo. Once, and only once, she warned that someone or other would ‘scunts’, a verb that loosely translates as ‘freak out’: ‘People here looked at me weird so I stopped using it.’

It was easier, however, to omit foreign words than to pick up the patois of a new school. ‘At first I didn’t like Melbourne and I was like ‘No, I’m not going to conform’, but I got over it,’ Amanda says.

Cliqués of all ages share a jargon that binds them, but the language of teenage girls holds a particular fascination for linguists. Members of the more garrulous sex have a way with words; they tell it like it is and have a knack for inventing the smartest and bitchiest rejoinders …

Argh! favoured by adults but rejected by today’s teenagers is supplanted by an entirely new vocab incubating in high schools.

Almost 18 months after the move to Melbourne, Amanda is one of four students selected by Box Hill Secondary College to field questions on teen slang. It’s a task that cannot be taken too seriously; most teen talk is tongue-in-cheek and grates a little when used out of context. But the girls have studied linguistics and carefully consider their everyday patois.
Seventeen-year-old Sara Morton has a theory on why the language of teenage girls might be of interest. 'We do have a lot of influence — we are big consumers and a lot of marketing is directed at us,' she says.

The girls explain that the school population is divided into subcultures, such as jocks, musos, stoners and emos — the latter referring to guys in tight black jeans with black hair. Girls with attitude are known either as the plastic (an epithet borrowed from the film Mean Girls) or ‘Oompa Loompas’, a swipe that likens their fake-tan complexions to the orange-hued workers at Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory.

South-west of Box Hill at Deer Park Secondary College, many of the words overlap but the girls there appear more keen to discuss the school’s localised slang. Some of the year 12s have revived old catchphrases and invented new ones that they have sought to promote with varying degrees of success. Samantha Galea, 17, favours retro expressions; she will often say things are the ‘bee’s knees’ — praise usually requiring explanation — and occasionally proclaims that she is ‘peeved’.

Samantha and her siblings and friends have also coined a bizarre adjective that has taken hold among the year 12s: if something is unpleasant, annoying or inopportune, it’s ‘Gary’. ‘That’s Gary, man,’ one might say to console a friend.

[Professor Pam] Peters says that teenagers use language as a kind of identity badge that has the effect of excluding adults. Even when that identity badge is removed, some of the teen-specific words will linger... She says that the word ‘cool’ has proved particularly enduring, having outlived synonyms such as ‘ace’.

To even attempt to grasp the lingo that circulates at Lauriston Girls’ School, you have to be well versed in cinema. The girls pepper their speech with frequent references to cult films and television programs, aptly inserting the quotations to emphasise a point. Fashions may be described as ‘nice’, ‘interesting’, ‘different’, a Kath & Kim-ism, but that’s a fairly straightforward example. Most pop references are far more obscure...

The popular abuse of the word ‘like’ — a linguistic bugbear of many generations — provides insight into the changing context of colloquial slang... the term ‘like’ has morphed over decades. According to [Associate Professor] Sali Tagliamonte’s research, today’s teenagers are prone to using ‘the ‘like quotative’, linguistic jargon best explained by example: ‘I was like, ‘Oh my God’.

Tagliamonte says that English speakers in their 20s and 30s also use the like quotative but less frequently than teenagers, while those over 40 avoid it altogether.

Internet and mobile phone technologies have also helped to shape teen-speak. Kids will occasionally exclaim LOL (laugh out loud) or find themselves barred (cut off) by angry peers. G2G, an acronym for got to go, is now popular, as is ‘kisses’ — the long form of the multiple Xs used to sign off text messages. ‘I’m ashamed of it, but I’ll say ‘kisses’,” says Liz Clarke, a year 12 student at Lauriston Girls’ School. But like most other slang, it’s said tongue-in-cheek. ‘Mostly, we use these kinds of expressions to mock ourselves,’ she says.

*The Age*, 9 April 2006
Activities ...  
**UNDERSTANDING a feature article**

**Getting started**
1. How many different schools did the journalist go to in order to interview students about their language? Did the journalist interview any boys?
2. With a partner:
   a. List the different words for *language* you can find in the article.
   b. Name the two language experts that the writer refers to in the article. Explain, in your own words, one thing that each one says about teenage language.

**Working through**
3. What do you think is the purpose of the photograph and caption that appear with the article? Why do you think the photo and caption were included?
4. In the fourth paragraph of the article, the writer talks about ‘foreign’ words. Does she mean foreign or does she mean not familiar to the student, Amanda?
5. With your partner, create two graphic organisers like the ones shown here. In the ‘Common slang’ organiser, write in the expressions used in the article that you or your friends would be likely to use. In the other organiser, write in any expressions that you would hardly ever or never use. Add or delete circles as necessary. You can do this by hand or use a word processor.

**LANGUAGE link**

**Photos in newspapers**

Until the late 1800s, newspapers generally contained no photographs. These days, we expect all news to have accompanying images. In a print or online newspaper, images can convey many things. They can show what a person looks like, show where an event took place, or capture the moment that a terrible event occurred, for example.

Celebrity gossip magazines are very good at combining sensational headlines with photos that appear to support them. ‘Ted is cheating!’ will be the headline with a photograph of ‘Ted’ kissing someone on the cheek. It may be his sister, but we are not told that.

In newspapers, photos of people help us to identify who an article is talking about and what sort of people they are.

**Compare a newspaper and a gossip magazine to see how they use photographs and captions.**

**ANALYSING and EVALUATING a feature article about slang**

**Getting started**
6. Do you think the article would have been better if the journalist had interviewed teenage boys as well?
   a. If boys had been interviewed, would their slang be very similar to the girls? If not, what sorts of things would be different?
   b. Would boys have just as much to say about their language as girls?
7 In the first six paragraphs of the article, find all the words that are synonyms for *slang* or *language* and replace them with the word *slang* only. What effect does this have? Why do you think the writer used so many different words for slang?

**Working through**

8 You know a lot about teenage language because you are a teenager. Are there any things that the journalist gets slightly wrong, in your opinion? If there are, explain what they are and why this might be the case.

9 In a small group, discuss the comment by Professor Pam Peters, who says that ‘teenagers use language as a kind of identity badge that has the effect of excluding adults’.
   a Do you think this is true?
   b How much of the teenage slang that you use is understood by your parents?
   c Do they ever actually use words that are from ‘your’ language? If so, how do you feel about that?
   d If you hear older people using teenage slang, what is your reaction?

**Going further**

10 How do you think the journalist feels about teenage slang? Does she express an opinion about it or does she remain neutral? Find examples in the text to support your answer.

11 Read the final paragraph and final sentence of the article. How would you sum up the conclusion of the article?

**RESPONDING to ideas about teenage slang**

**Getting started**

12 In a small group, come up with a list of 10 slang words or expressions that are not mentioned in the article. If there are any that you think are specific to your school, list them. Then create sample dialogues to show how each is used. Your purpose is to translate your slang for an adult audience.

**Working through**

13 Take the dialogues you created in question 12 and adapt them so that they can be presented to the class. The rest of the class takes on the role of grandparents or elders. One member of your group can act as a narrator or MC, giving the definition of each term. These definitions should be in standard, formal English. Other members of the group then take it in turns to act out the dialogues, showing how each expression is used in context. Use humour, and make the dialogues entertaining. Allow time at the end for the ‘elders’ to ask questions. The narrator should respond in formal English. Before you start, read the Wordsmith on the following page.

14 As an alternative to question 13, create a short video in which members of your group perform the dialogues you created in question 12. Your aim is to inform grandparents about the slang that young people use, allowing them to understand their grandchildren better. Decide whether your video will be humorous or serious. Remember that your audience will want to hear clearly what is being said, so make sure all ‘actors’ speak clearly, while still sounding natural. It’s best to avoid recording where there is background noise, such as traffic.
AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

It is important that we choose the right language for our intended audience and purpose.

In conversations with your friends, it’s appropriate for you to use informal language, teenage slang — even rude expressions. However, you probably would not use this language when talking to your grandmother or the school principal.

Similarly, a written job application requires more formal language than a hastily scrawled note to let your mother know you have gone to the library.

Notice how one of the students interviewed for the article on pages 45–6 is quoted as saying, ‘We do have a lot of influence — we are big consumers and a lot of marketing is directed at us.’ This is a relatively formal statement, with no teenage slang in it, even though we know the student uses slang with her friends. Perhaps because she is being interviewed by a journalist, she has switched to Standard Australian English.

Audience and purpose form part of the ‘context’ of any oral or written language communication. For example, look at the sample sentences below. You might like to come up with your own examples too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample sentences</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Possible context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, no, I totally understand where you’re coming from.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Conversation with a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d like to introduce our new member, Jack, to the meeting.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting of a club or organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOL! Did you find that on the interwebs?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Email to a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its defo not in my room. soz. annd also, im going to maccas tomorrow. if you’re still interested.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Facebook exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the volume, turn the orange dial clockwise.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instruction manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainforests are arguably the most valuable of all the world’s ecosystems.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Feature article or essay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your audience is who you are aiming your communication at. Your purpose is your reason for communicating. Look at these examples below. Notice how the style of the sentences changes when there is a different audience, even though the underlying purpose remains the same. Again, think of your own examples as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample sentences</th>
<th>Possible audience</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, you’re crazy, man! Don’t do it.</td>
<td>Teenage friend</td>
<td>To persuade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts say BlastOff will trim fat in just two weeks.</td>
<td>Potential customers</td>
<td>To persuade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on the new school gymnasium will begin in July.</td>
<td>Students and parents</td>
<td>To inform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dude, we’re meeting at 6 at the footy oval.</td>
<td>Teenage friend</td>
<td>To inform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Oscar Wilde said, ‘I am not young enough to know everything.’</td>
<td>Businesspeople listening to a speech</td>
<td>To entertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi, this is your mobile. There’s no problem. I just wanted to leave your pocket … the smell is unbearable!</td>
<td>Teenage friend</td>
<td>To entertain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**OVER TO YOU …**

1. Who is the audience for the article ‘So to, like, speak’?
2. Is the purpose of the article to persuade, to inform or to entertain? Explain the reasons for your answer.
3. Re-read the preface of *Chinese Cinderella* on pages 34–5. Do you think its purpose is to inform or persuade or both? Explain.
4. Read the following sentences, which were posted on Facebook. Translate them into more formal language. Take care with spelling, capital letters and punctuation.
   - a. *we totally just watched 6 episodes of modern family in a row :D*
   - b. *Dewww I saw birds of tokyo tonight youtube them they were assum :)*
   - c. *Flippen amazing day handling snakes. That eastern brown never stood a chance against my handling skillz*
5. Audience and purpose do not just affect the language of text. They also affect its appearance and layout. Look at the following examples and try to decide what their purpose is and who they are aimed at.

**My view …**

Do you think that your use of teenage slang is an important part of who you are? Is it part of your individual identity or your group identity (your peer group)? How easy do you find it to switch between formal and informal language? Which comes more naturally to you: formal language or teenage slang? If you change the way you speak and write, are you losing your identity or are you expanding your identity?
2.3 SPOKEN LANGUAGE IN FICTION AND NON-FICTION

How does lost or hidden language affect identity?

Most of us take for granted that we have ‘freedom of speech’. We can generally say and write what we like, as long as we do not publicly use offensive language or defame people (publicly state something untruthful that may damage someone’s reputation).

We can also use our preferred language. If you’re a teenager, you are free to use teen slang when you like, though it may not be wise in an exam or job interview. You are also free to speak in a language other than English, though you will probably use it only with other speakers of that language.

However, a person sometimes feels ashamed of a language that they speak. At times in the past, people have even been prevented from using their first language. It becomes buried and forgotten. What happens when we lose parts of our language? Does it change who we are?

It is also possible to ‘lose’ language when another version of English replaces Australian English. Television shows, movies and music from the USA influence us, and we pick up American words, expressions and even pronunciation at times. Some people complain that we are sounding less Australian as a globalised culture begins to take over what was once more uniquely Australian.

The extract on pages 52–3 is from the autobiography My Place. The author, Sally Morgan, grew up thinking she and her family were Indian. She discovered only when she was 15 that they were Aboriginal. Morgan spent many years trying to find out about her past by asking her mother (Gladys, or Glad), her grandmother (Nan, Nanna or Daisy) and her great-uncle (Arthur) to tell her about their earlier lives. As the extract shows, not everyone in the family wanted to remember the past.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to read the Language link below and to complete the Ready to Read activities on the next page.

LANGUAGE link
Aboriginal naming and identity

The words Aborigine (noun), Aboriginal (adjective) and Indigenous (adjective) are the names that Europeans gave to the original inhabitants of Australia. This was not what they called themselves.

Originally, each language group or sub-group had its own name, such as Kadigal, Gurindji, Pitjantjara and Kamilaroi. Many of these groups still exist and their members prefer to be called by the name of their language group, rather than Aboriginal.

People from the Torres Strait should not be called Aboriginal people. They are Torres Strait Islanders, but prefer to be known by their island name, such as Meriam. Another name that some Aboriginal people choose to use when speaking of themselves in English is blackfella. Sally Morgan’s relatives use this in the following extract. Most Aboriginal people consider this a neutral term, but it is best avoided if you don’t know your audience.

If you are Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander and you know about your language group, tell the class something you know about your people and language. If you are not an Indigenous Australian, research past or present Indigenous language groups in your local area.
from *My Place*  
by Sally Morgan

‘Now Nanna,’ Mum said in her Let’s Be Reasonable voice. ‘Arthur is your only brother; whenever he comes, you pick a fight with him. You’re both getting old, it’s time you made up. He doesn’t want to listen to your complaints all the time.’

Nan was determined to remain perverse. ‘And we don’t want to hear his stories either,’ she said forcefully. ‘He goes over and over the same old thing. He wasn’t the only one hard done by.’

‘No he wasn’t,’ Mum replied, ‘but at least he’ll talk about it. You won’t tell us anything. Whenever we ask you about the past, you get nasty. We’re your family, we’ve got a right to know.’

‘Glad, you’re always goin’ on about the past. You and Arthur are a good pair, you don’t know what a secret is.’

‘It’s not a matter of secrets, Nan,’ Mum reasoned. ‘You seem to be ashamed of your past, I don’t know why. All my life, you’ve never told me anything, never let me belong to anyone. All my life, I’ve wanted a family, you won’t even tell me about my own grandmother. You go away and let Arthur talk, at least he tells me something.’

Nan opened her mouth to reply, but Arthur cut her off with, ‘If you don’t go Daisy, I’ll tell them your Aboriginal name.’

Nan was furious. ‘You wouldn’t!’ she fumed.
’Too right I will,’ said Arthur. Nan knew when she was beaten, she
stormed off.

’What is it?’ both Mum and I asked excitedly after she’d gone.

’No, I can’t tell you,’ he said, ’it’s not as if I wouldn’t like to, but Daisy
should tell you herself. There’s a lot she could tell you, she knows more
about some of her people than I do.’

’But she won’t talk, Arthur,’ Mum replied. ’Sometimes I think she
thinks she’s white. She’s ashamed of her family.’

’Aah, she’s bin with whitefellas too long. They make her feel ashamed,
that’s what white people do to you. Why should we be ’shamed, we bin
here longer than them. You don’t see the black man diggin’ up the land,
scarrin’ it. The white man got no sense.’

I sat and listened to many conversations between Mum and Arthur
after that. Whenever he turned up for a visit, Mum would ring me at
home and say, ’He’s here!’ and I would go rushing over.

On one such afternoon, I wandered out to the backyard to find Nan
and Arthur under a gum tree, jabbering away in what sounded to me like
a foreign language. I sat down very quietly on the steps and listened. I
prayed they wouldn’t see me.

After a few minutes, Nan said, ’My eyes aren’t that bad, Sally. I can see
you there spyin’ on us.’

’I’m not spying,’ I defended myself. ’Keep talking, don’t let me stop
you.’

’We’re not talkin’ no more,’ Nan said. ’You hear that, Arthur, no more!’

Just then, Mum came out with a tray of afternoon tea. After she’d
given them their tea and cake, I followed her inside.

’Mum,’ I said excitedly, ’did you hear them? They were talking in their
own language!’

’What, Nanna too?’

’Yep! And not just a few words, she was jabbering away like she always
talked like that. I wouldn’t have thought she’d remember after all these
years.’

’Sally are you sure you’re not making this up?’

’No! Honestly Mum, I heard them!’

’But it must be years since she used her own language. Fancy her
remembering it all this time.’

’It’s a ray of hope, Mum,’ I said. ’She could have easily forgotten it,
language needs to be used to be remembered. It must mean it was
important to her. She might turn into a proud blackfella yet.’

’Don’t you ever give up?’

’Where there’s life there’s hope, Mum.’

Over the following weeks, whenever I saw Nan, I’d bring up the
topic of her language. She was very defensive at first and would lose her
temper with me, but, after a while, she gradually came around. One day
she said, ’Hey, Sally, you know what goombo is?’

’No, what,’ I grinned.

’Wee-wee.’

Nan chuckled and walked off.

She told me many words after that, but I could never get her to say
a sentence for me. It would be a long time before I would learn to be
content with the little she was willing to give.
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING family relationships in autobiography

Getting started
1 Use the following word list to fill in the blanks in the paragraph below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glad</th>
<th>life</th>
<th>ashamed</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>upset</th>
<th>past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>language</td>
<td>persistent</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td>words</td>
<td>Daisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>belong</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>eventually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nan is Sally's __________. Nan is _________ with her daughter, granddaughter and ________, Arthur, because they want her to talk about the ________. While Arthur is happy to talk about his earlier ________, Nan seems to feel ________ about hers. Nan's daughter, ________, therefore doesn't know very much about her extended ________, so she feels as if she doesn't ________ to anyone. Nan, or ________, Storms off when Arthur threatens to reveal her ________ name. He thinks that ________ people have made Nan feel embarrassed about being Aboriginal. One day, however, Sally goes home and hears her grandmother and Arthur speaking another ________. She and her mother had no idea that Nan remembered the Aboriginal language that she must have spoken as a ________. Sally is very ________, though, and ________ persuades Nan to tell her some ________ in her first language.

2 Does Arthur live with Sally's mother and Nan or does he just visit occasionally? Find two sentences that support your answer.

Working through
3 Read the following list of adjectives and decide which ones could be used to describe Sally and which could be used to describe Nan. Use a dictionary to check any words you are unsure of. Are there any words in the list that could describe them both? Explain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>argumentative</th>
<th>determined</th>
<th>stubborn</th>
<th>defensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reluctant</td>
<td>hopeful</td>
<td>secretive</td>
<td>curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inquisitive</td>
<td>feisty</td>
<td>mischievous</td>
<td>humorous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Going further
4 With a partner, discuss whether Sally, Glad and Arthur are bullying Nan or just persuading her to do something. Justify your opinion by referring to the text and to your own experiences.
ANALYSING language and identity issues in an autobiography

Getting started
5 Do Nan and Sally speak in the same way? How does the writer (Sally) show her grandmother’s and great-uncle’s style of speech?
6 When Nan cannot believe that Arthur would reveal her Aboriginal name, he responds: ‘Too right I will.’
   a Would you ever use the expression too right?
   b Do you know anyone else who might use it? What age group are they in?
   c What is a current, contemporary way of saying too right?
   d Do you think this expression might eventually become extinct? Would you care if it did? Explain your view.

Working through
7 In a small group, discuss the following questions.
   a Why do you think Nan and Sally might have different styles of speech? What might be different about their lives?
   b Do you think Nan should be allowed to keep some things secret or does her family have a right to ask her questions?
   c Why do you think Nan (Daisy) is ashamed of her Aboriginal name and her first language? Refer to the text extract and the Literature link at right. Try to guess or predict what else might be revealed in the rest of the book.
      Have someone in the group act as the scribe or reporter, to write down what the group agreed on, what it disagreed on, and some of the ideas that were expressed. Then create a series of Word art to show everyone’s views for questions (a) and (b). Be creative in the way you display them.

Going further
8 Arthur says about Daisy: ‘Aah, she’s bin with whitefellas too long. They make her feel ‘shamed, that’s what white people do to you. Why should we be ‘shamed, we bin here longer than them. You don’t see the black man diggin’ up the land, scarrin’ it. The white man got no sense.’
   a Do you agree or disagree with Arthur? Explain.
   b Why do you think he might feel this way?
   c Do you think Sally agrees, or disagrees with him? Justify your view.

RESPONDING to a text

Getting started
9 How do you think Nan and Arthur feel when they sit under the tree and speak their first language together for the first time in many years? Write a paragraph as if you are Nan, and another as if you are Arthur, describing your feelings.

Working through
10 See what you can find out about the following Aboriginal words: bindi-eye, kookaburra, dingo and budgerigar. Use an Australian dictionary such as the Macquarie Dictionary Fifth Edition or Macquarie Primary Dictionary, to check:
   a which Aboriginal language each one is from (this is usually at the end of the dictionary entry)
   b whether we pronounce the word as it was originally pronounced.

Going further
11 Are there any Aboriginal placenames in your local area? Tourism information centres, local libraries and national park centres are useful places to research. If there are Aboriginal elders in your community, talk to them about the local placenames that might be in their language.
**Wordsmith ...**

**SETTING OUT DIALOGUE IN FICTION**

Dialogue is any conversation between characters in a play, film or novel, or between real people in a non-fiction book. There are different ways of writing out dialogue. In *Unit 1*, we saw how the author of *In the Sea There Are Crocodiles* (pages 17–18) wrote dialogue without quotation marks. He also did not use many dialogue tags — he said and so on. This is a less traditional way to deal with dialogue.

In contrast, Sally Morgan uses a more conventional method of writing dialogue in *My Place*. Let’s look more closely at how to write dialogue in the traditional way.

First, you will need quotation marks. You can use either single (‘ ’) or double (“ “). Neither one is right or wrong. In this book, single quotes are used, but many print and online newspapers use double quotes. Compare the look of them below:

‘Open the door!’

"Open the door!"

Decide which you prefer and stick to that choice within a single text.

Now let’s look at what to do with punctuation. In the example below, the final full stop comes inside the closing quotation mark.

Punctuation inside closing quotation mark

‘Please open the door.’

But what happens when a line of dialogue is followed by a dialogue tag? Instead of a full stop, a comma is used, but it still appears inside the closing quotation mark.

Comma inside closing quotation mark; Full stop at end

‘I don’t want to,’ Ramona said.

Don’t use a comma when an exclamation mark or question mark is needed instead.

Question mark inside the closing quotation mark; no need for a comma

‘Are you feeling all right?’ asked her mother.
‘Just leave me alone!’ said Ramona.

Exclamation mark inside the closing quotation mark; no need for a comma

What do we do when a character continues speaking after a dialogue tag? If what follows is a new sentence, follow the pattern below.

Full stop after the dialogue tag if what follows is a new sentence

‘There’s no need to bite my head off,’ said her mother. ‘I’m just worried about you.’

If the continuation is not a new sentence, follow the pattern below.

Comma after the dialogue tag if what follows is not a new sentence

‘I know,’ said Ramona, ‘but you don’t have to worry.’

What happens if a dialogue tag comes before the line of dialogue? In this case, use a comma before the first quotation mark.

Comma before the first quotation mark

Ramona said, ‘Go away.’
Finally, you need to make choices about dialogue tags. Are you going to vary them or keep them simple? Here are three ways of treating the same conversation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogue style 1: use said only</th>
<th>Dialogue style 2: use synonyms for said, plus adverbs</th>
<th>Dialogue style 3: use few dialogue tags</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Just go away,' said Ramona.</td>
<td>'Just go away;' Ramona replied angrily.</td>
<td>Ramona stuck her headphones in. 'Just go away.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Okay. I just thought I’d let you know that I’m making a cake,' said her mother.</td>
<td>'Okay. I just thought I’d let you know that I’m making a cake,' her mother responded.</td>
<td>'Okay.' Her mother paused. 'I just thought I’d let you know that I’m making a cake.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'What sort of cake?' said Ramona.</td>
<td>'What sort of cake?' asked Ramona quietly.</td>
<td>'What sort of cake?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Chocolate and raspberry,' said her mother. 'You don’t want to lick the bowl, do you?'</td>
<td>'Chocolate and raspberry,' grinned her mother. 'You don’t want to lick the bowl, do you?'</td>
<td>'Chocolate and raspberry. You don’t want to lick the bowl do you?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s a dirty trick. You’re not playing fair,' said Ramona, flinging open the door.</td>
<td>'That’s a dirty trick. You’re not playing fair,' said Ramona crankily as she flung open the door.</td>
<td>Ramona flung open the door. 'That’s a dirty trick. You’re not playing fair!'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writers who just use said, as in style 1, prefer it because it is almost invisible; the reader hardly notices it and concentrates instead on what characters are saying.

Writers who follow style 2 prefer to use a variety of alternatives to said, and they use adverbs to tell the reader about how things are being expressed. This draws more attention to the dialogue tags.

Writers who use style 3 like to ‘de-clutter’ their writing. They use said if necessary but try to avoid dialogue tags as much as possible. This means they have to take care to avoid confusion over who is speaking.

Dialogue in a play or a transcript is much simpler. It usually looks something like this, and has no dialogue tags:

**Jack:** What are you doing?

**Lauren:** Nothing.

**OVER TO YOU ...**

1 Out of the three dialogue styles above, which do you prefer and why?

2 Re-read the extracts from My Place and In the Sea There Are Crocodiles (Unit 1).
   a Are you able to follow the dialogue in In the Sea There Are Crocodiles without any confusion about who is speaking?
   b Does Sally Morgan use dialogue style 2 only? What do you think of the way she handles dialogue? Why?

3 Write your own piece of dialogue based on a conversation you have had recently. If you cannot remember the conversation exactly, invent lines. Pick one of the three dialogue styles shown above and follow that pattern consistently.

**My view ...**

Have your ideas changed about what it means to ‘lose’ language? Does losing or forgetting words from a language such as English matter as much as losing an entire language? Should we try to bring back older English expressions such as **too right**? Should we try to revive some Aboriginal languages?
COMPOSE AND CREATE

Productive focus: writing and creating

Create names for characters
Create a series of names for the following fictional characters appearing in either a novel or a film.

a Choose their given name and their family name.
b Decide whether the character will have either a short version of their given name or a nickname. If you decide the character will be known by this name, try choosing this first, and then work backwards to their given or family name.
c Excluding the fantasy genre stories, research the origins and meaning of the names you have chosen. For the fantasy genres, you can invent the origin and meaning of the characters’ names.
d In a paragraph for each character, explain why you chose the names. Talk about:
   ● culture and/or nationality
   ● historical period
   ● the sound of the name: hard sounds, soft sounds, number of syllables, feminine versus masculine
   ● the things you associate the name with.
e In two paragraphs, write a plot outline of a novel or film, in which one of the following characters appears. Describe what the story will be about and explain the major events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Description</th>
<th>Given name</th>
<th>Family name</th>
<th>Nickname or short name</th>
<th>Origin and meaning of names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A modern Australian male action hero being hunted by international criminals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A modern Aboriginal female detective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A nineteenth-century accident-prone English boy genius</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A modern French chef with plans for world domination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A modern Australian female surfer hero in a cyclone disaster story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A nineteenth-century Australian girl (10 years old) caught up in a flood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A modern 15-year-old Australian skateboarding champion (male or female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 1950s 15-year-old Australian rodeo champion (male or female)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A modern Russian scientist (male or female) who finds a dinosaur frozen (but not quite dead) in a glacier</td>
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<tr>
<td>An 18-year-old male on a quest in a fantasy story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An evil sorcerer in a fantasy story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a product or write an article

*Either*

Imagine you are a product. What kind of product might you be? Give your product a name. What ‘labels’ would you apply to yourself? Put various labels, warnings and information on your packaging. Create a piece of artwork of your packaging, either drawing by hand or using drawing software. An example is shown on the left.

**Some key points to remember**

- Try to stick to writing positive things about yourself.
- Decide whether you are going to use your real name as part of your product name or whether you will invent something completely new.
- Take care with using nouns. Check which ones are proper nouns and which are common nouns, and use capitals accordingly. Review the Wordsmith on Using Nouns on page 38.

Now reflect on this process. Did you write only good things about yourself or did you include slightly negative things? What labels are you proud of and what labels are you less proud of? Do your friends agree with your labels?

Finally, write a paragraph or two describing how you felt about being a ‘product’ and being ‘labelled’. Was it better to label yourself than have others do it for you? Or do you think we should completely avoid labelling ourselves? Does labelling box you in too much?

*Or*

Write a feature article about how your town or city has been taken over by the Pure English Enforcement Brigade, known by the acronym PEEB. Teenage slang, Aboriginal languages, quirky family expressions, and foreign languages have been banned. Explain how PEEB detects outbreaks of non-standard English and how they punish people. Quote your friends and family members as they tell you how they feel about the situation. Describe how people go about secretly expressing themselves in their own way.

**Some key points to remember**

- Remember you are writing a feature article, so you can be subjective.
- Try to get your article to look like a newspaper article. Choose a font that looks like a newspaper font.
- Think of a catchy headline and insert your ‘by-line’ under the headline.
- Make your first paragraph dramatic or interesting. It has to ‘hook’ the reader.
- Keep your paragraphs short: between one and three sentences in length.
- Use direct quotes from people you ‘interview’. They should talk about how they feel when they cannot use part of their language and how it affects their identity.
- Quote a language expert. Because the subject of your article is imaginary, your expert can be imaginary too! Their language should be formal.

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**eBookplus**

Use the assessment criteria rubric to guide you through your chosen task.
Transcribe or write dialogue

Either

View an episode of ‘Blue Water High’ or another Australian production designed for a teenage audience.

Transcribe the scene — that is, write down the dialogue in the form of a playscript.

(See the Wordsmith on setting out dialogue on pages 56–7.) Try to show how people say things. For example, if a character says goin’ and gunna, write the words like that, rather than going and going to.

Now annotate the transcript with your comments on the characters’ language and what you notice about it. Do the characters talk like teenagers? Do they talk like surfers? Or do they just use Standard Australian English? Go to the Blue Water High weblink in your eBookPLUS and look at the glossary under the ‘Surf stuff’ tab. How many of the surfing expressions in the glossary did you hear in the episode?

Next, write a paragraph about what you found, based on your annotations.

Finally, rewrite part of the script so that characters still express the same ideas but in a different way. You can choose to make their language more ‘teen-like’ or more formal.

Some key points to remember

● Pause the episode often to allow you to write down each line of dialogue.
● Use handwriting to take down the dialogue initially, and then type it into Word later.
● Decide how you will create your annotations.
  – You could use highlighter pen and handwrite your comments.
  – You could use the ‘Comments’ function under the ‘Review’ tab in Word.

Or

In pairs or small groups, write a scene for a short story, soap opera or sitcom. It should contain dialogue between a teenage character and another person who speaks more formally or who uses older Australian slang. Use the language diary you have been keeping. Entertain your readers with the misunderstandings between the characters.

Now write a complete short story or further scenes for your TV episode based on what you created for your scene.

Some key points to remember

● Think about who the characters will be. Some ideas are: a teenager and his or her grandparent; a school student and a shopkeeper; an apprentice and his or her boss.

Use the Australian slang weblink in your eBookPLUS to find some older Australian slang. Just look for phrases that you don’t recognise.

Self-evaluation . . .

1 What was the most interesting thing you learned in this unit and what topic did you already have some knowledge of?
2 Which tasks did you find easy and which did you find more challenging?
3 Name three skills you used but that you think you need to practise.