UNIT 1

WORDPLAY

The BIG question
Why and how is language powerful?

Key learnings
- The English language has evolved over time.
- Our language reflects our values and shapes our identities.
- Language can be powerful, persuasive and playful.

Knowledge, understanding and skills
Students will:
- understand the origins of English and the different forms of English
- understand the social importance of satire and other forms of humour
- appreciate the power of words to express thoughts and feelings, to argue a point of view, and to persuade.
Words, words, words...

But words are things, and a small drop of ink, Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.

— From ‘Don Juan’ by Lord Byron

‘English has always been a vacuum-cleaner of language — sucking in words from any other language that its speakers come into contact with.’

— From Time Magazine, 1997, by David Crystal, British linguist

Eh, look out! She’s there again. That migaloo jalbu, Sharyn. Hanging off her front fence. She’s watching me go past. She’s giving me that smile, that mango-mouth one. Maybe migaloos can’t see those clouds that follow you on bad days.

— From My Girragundji by Meme McDonald & Boori Pryor

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all.”
Powerful and playful words

Take a look at the texts on the opposite page. As you can see, English is a complex and surprising language. You might not even recognise some of the texts as English. What they show us is that the English language doesn't stand still. It is always changing and evolving. These texts also highlight how powerful, even life-changing, words can be. Words can inspire love, start a fight, move someone to tears, create a sense of belonging and identity; they can also make us laugh and open our eyes to truths.

Tuning in

1 **Think and say why:** Of all the texts featured in the collage, which one has the most meaning to you personally? Why? Which ones do you find difficult or confusing? Why do you think this is?

2 **Did you know?**
   - We cannot really be sure how many words there are in the English language, but half a million is a good estimate.
   - There are at least 400 million native speakers of English worldwide.
   - **Globish** is a condensed form of English developed by Jean-Paul Nerrière. There are only 1500 words in Globish.
   - The longest nonsense word in English appears in James Joyce's novel, *Finnegan's Wake* (1939). The word describes Tom Finnegan's fall from a ladder: *Bothallchoractorschumminaroundgansumuminarumdrumstrumtruminahumptadumptaawaultopoofooldooeruamaunsturnup*.

3 **Find out:** Research Globish words and phrases. Think about the possible advantages and disadvantages of a global form of English and list them in a two-column table.

4 **Think and write:** Respond to one of the following:
   - Do you agree with Humpty Dumpty that when you use a word, 'it means just what [you] choose it to mean?' Can you think of instances when the meaning you intended was not the meaning received?
   - What do you think Humpty Dumpty means when he says, 'The question is . . . which is to be master — that's all'?
   - Can a word be made to mean many different things, as Alice declares? Choose a word and scribble down as many possible meanings as you can think of. Are all of these meanings still understood these days?
   - What is your favourite word? Why?

**LANGUAGE link**

**Newspeak**

Writer George Orwell coined the term *Newspeak* in his novel *1984*. Newspeak is a shorthand type of English. Orwell's character Syme tells Winston Smith, the protagonist, 'You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?' As Syme declares, 'The whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought.'

Today, we might use the word Newspeak to refer to deliberately confusing or misleading language used by politicians or government officials. It is also sometimes used to refer to newly coined expressions.

**Find some examples of Newspeak in a daily newspaper, perhaps in the politics or world events section.**
1.1 CHANGING WORDS

Where did English come from?

What we call the English language is, in reality, a hotch-potch of many different languages and dialects. In fact, _hotch-potch_ comes from an old French word, _hochepot_, meaning ‘stew or soup’. And English is still expanding and evolving. New words are added to the language as populations change, technology develops, and trends emerge.

A travel guide to English would begin with the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain, home to various Celtic peoples, in the fifth century. It was not until the seventh and eighth centuries that written records of Old English, or Anglo-Saxon English, began to appear. The Anglo-Saxons gave us words such as _earth_, _house_, _night_ and _sleep_.

Next stop on our tour of English is 1066, the year the Normans, from France, invaded Britain. This is known as the Norman Conquest. Thousands of French words now entered English, many of them based on Latin words; for example, _parliament_, _beauty_, _romance_ and _mansion_. No intrepid traveller can overlook Middle English, taking in the sights and sounds of the period from 1000 to about 1500.

As the journey continues, we enter the Renaissance period (1500–1650) during which many words were borrowed from Greek and Latin. Shakespeare added some spice to the English language with inventions such as _savagery_, _fashionable_, _advertising_, _obscene_ and _zany_.

English expanded even more when the British started to travel the world and establish colonies in America, Australia, Africa, India and the Caribbean. The Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, also a time of great scientific discovery, saw the invention and introduction of new words, such as _crankshaft_, _tractor_, _stethoscope_, _vaccine_ and _radiator_.

Today’s Digital Revolution has seen the creation of new words (neologisms), such as _internet_ and _byte_, and the appropriation of existing words to take on entirely new meanings, such as _mouse_ and _cache_.

What do early forms of English look like?

Early forms of English can look very strange to us. It’s hard to believe that the fragment of _Beowulf_ on the opening page (top left corner) is written in Anglo-Saxon (also known as Old English). It might as well be a foreign language. Medieval or Middle English is slightly more recognisable to us, though words may be spelt differently.

An early folk ballad

‘The Twa Corbies’ (which translates as ‘the two crows’) is a medieval Scottish version of the English folk _ballad_ ‘The Three Ravens’. It is written in a _dialect_, that is, a form of English specific to a particular region or group of people. The narrator of the poem recalls a conversation between two crows who discover the body of a dead knight. The poem contains _rhyme_, _rhythm_ and _alliteration_, which feature often in the ballad form.

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

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**NEED TO KNOW**

**ballad** a type of poem that tells a story and has the qualities of a regular rhyme and rhythm. Folk ballads were originally set to music and passed on by word of mouth. Literary ballads originated as written, not spoken, poems.

dialect a form of a language specific to a particular region or group of people

**rhyme** agreement or correspondence in the final sound of a word at the end of a line; for example, _make_/ _break_, _yellow_/ _mellow_

**rhythm** a pattern of beats, or stressed and unstressed syllables. A regular rhythm is a repeating pattern of beats throughout a poem.

**alliteration** repetition of a consonant at the start of words positioned close together in a phrase or sentence
Look at the illustration that appears with the poem. Which of the following words come to mind when you think of crows?

- cute – sweet
- scary – gentle
- spooky – nasty

What does the illustration suggest the poem might be about?

Scan the poem. Do you think you will find this difficult to read? If 1 is easy and 5 is difficult, how would you rate this poem?

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**The Twa Corbies**

As I was walking all alone,
I heard two corbies making a moan;
The one to the other say,
'What shall we go and dine the day?'

'In ahint yon auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new slain knight;
And nane do ken that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound an his lady fair.'

'His hound is for the hunting gone,
His hawk for fetch the wild-fowl home,
His lady's taken another mate,
So we may make our dinner white.'

'Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I'll pike out his bonny blue een;
With his lock o his gowden hair
We'll theek oor nest when it grows bare.'

'Mony a one for him makes moan,
But nane sall ken what he is gane;
Oer his white banes, when they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair.'

*(Anonymous)*
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING a folk ballad

Getting started
1 Try reading the poem aloud. Does this make understanding the Scottish dialect easier or more difficult?
2 With a partner, decide which is the least recognisable word in the poem.

Working through
3 Have a go at working out the meanings of the following words. Find where they appear in the poem. Do the words around them give you any clues? Try saying them aloud to see if they sound similar to any modern English words.
   ● alane
   ● auld
   ● gowden
   ● hame
4 Which of the following features of a typical folk ballad can you identify in the poem? (See the Literature link, about features of a folk ballad on this page.) Use quoted lines from the poem to support your answers.
   a Regular rhyme
   b Regular rhythm or beat
   c A dramatic story
   d Repetition
   e Alliteration
5 Why do you think the poet has included direct speech or dialogue between the crows?

Going further
6 With a partner, write out the poem in modern English. Did you agree on this?

ANALYSING and INTERPRETING a folk ballad

Getting started
7 When you read this poem aloud or to yourself, how does it make you feel?
8 The crows are described as ‘making a mane’ (making a noise). What modern word for a type of sound does mane look and sound like?
9 If the annotations were removed, would you have understood the poem?

Working through
10 The poem contains strong visual imagery. For example:
   Ye’ll sit on his white hause-bane,
   And I’ll pike oot his bonny blue een.
   a Which words in the ballad are the most powerful in giving you a vivid picture of the crows feasting on the dead knight?
   b If hause means ‘house’ and bane means ‘bone’, can you explain why hause-bane means ‘collarbone’?
11 List the particular words in the poem that help to create a sad mood or tone.
12 Even though the poem uses an unfamiliar form of English, it still has the power to affect us emotionally. How is the reader made to feel sorry for the slain knight?

Going further
13 Why do you think it’s important to read the poem in the original dialect, rather than using a modern English translation?
Wordsmith ...

LOAN WORDS IN ENGLISH

When we come across unfamiliar words, it helps if we understand some of the origins of the English language. Words borrowed from another language are called ‘loan words’ and English is full of them.

During the Renaissance period of English history (roughly 1300s to 1600s), ancient Greek and Latin texts were extremely popular. This meant that many Greek and Latin words were borrowed and adapted by the English.

The word education, for example, comes from the Latin, educat, meaning ‘to rear or bring up’. The word atmosphere derives from the Greek words atmos meaning ‘vapour or steam’ and spharia meaning ‘sphere’.

Using a dictionary or the internet, find out the origins and meanings of these words:

- bicycle
- photography
- agoraphobia
- skeleton
- bacteria.

The following loan words entered English during the period of colonisation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when scientific knowledge was also expanding rapidly. Using your dictionary or the internet again, see if you can find out where they came from:

- raccoon
- barbecue
- banana
- assassin
- carnival
- syrup.

Reverse loan words

Other languages have also adopted and adapted English words. Words such as cool, basketball, weekend and sandwich are used by French speakers, for example.

Japlish is the term for English words that are given a Japanese pronunciation (such as errebator for elevator). The strange spelling is phonetic, meaning that the word is spelled as it is pronounced (in Japanese).

Can you work out what languages are combined with English to form Russlish, Chinglish and Singlish?

What do you think the following phonetically spelt ‘reverse loan words’ mean?

- aisukrimu
- shusi
- nekutai
- herkot
- muving pikceris

OVER TO YOU …

Write a short dialogue between two people using English words that are spelt phonetically. See if a classmate can work out what is being said.
How does our language reflect what we value?

Language is hard to separate from the culture and time period in which it operates. It reflects attitudes and values, often acting as an empowering or disempowering agent within that culture. Language and how it is used by different members of a culture can indicate our ethnicity, educational background, social and economic status and even gender. A member of the upper classes in eighteenth-century England would use language differently from a servant in his household. Similarly, a medieval peasant would use language differently to someone living today. In all cultures and times, language portrays what we think, feel and believe.

The following extracts represent different cultures and times. The first, from *Robinson Crusoe*, was written in 1719 by Daniel Defoe. It tells, from a first-person point of view, the story of an Englishman who is shipwrecked and captured by pirates before being rescued. He sets out once again on an expedition to acquire African slaves, only to be shipwrecked on an island. He builds a life on the island and befriends a native man whom he calls 'Friday'.

The second extract is from *A Little Princess* written by Frances Hodgson Burnett in 1905. Sara Crewe, the daughter of a rich soldier based in India, is sent to an English boarding school. Her father's death reduces her to poverty and she is forced to work as a servant. The story is written from a third-person point of view.

The final extract is from an Australian novel, *Njunjul the Sun*, written by Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor in 2002. Narrated from a first-person point of view, it tells the story of Njunjul's move to the city to make something of his life, only to find that he feels lost and directionless.

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

**NEED TO KNOW**

**attitudes** our ways of thinking about people and the world

**values** the principles that are important to us, and which guide the way we live our lives

**ethnicity** the state of belonging to a particular group that has a common cultural tradition

**first-person point of view** narration that uses the personal pronouns such as *I*, *me*, *we* and *us*, and is told by someone who is part of the story

**third-person point of view** narration that uses pronouns such as *he*, *she* and *they*, and is told by someone who is not part of the story

**READY TO READ ...**

- Look at the book covers above. Which one makes you feel you would enjoy reading the book? Why?
- Read each extract and note any words that are unfamiliar. Look these up in a dictionary and record their meanings.
- Which extract did you find the easiest to understand? Why do you think this is?
- Which of these extracts would be most appealing to boys? Which would appeal most to girls? Explain why.
Extract 1
from *Robinson Crusoe*
by Daniel Defoe

1. He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large, tall, and well-shaped, and, as I reckoned, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of an European in his countenance too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The color of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive color, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and white as ivory.

2. After he had slumbered, rather than slept, about half-an-hour, he awoke again, and came out of the cave to me, for I had been milking my goats, which I had in the enclosure just by. When he espied me, he came running to me, laying himself down again upon the ground, with all the possible signs of an humble, thankful disposition, making as many antic gestures to show it. At last he lays his head flat upon the ground, close to my foot, and sets my other foot upon his head, as he had done before, and after this made all the signs to me of subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable, to let me know how he would serve me as long as he lived. I understood him in many things, and let him know I was very well pleased with him. In a little time I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me; and, first, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life. I called him so for the memory of the time. I likewise taught him to say master, and then let him know that was to be my name.

Extract 2
from *A Little Princess*
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

1. She knew she need not hesitate to use the little piece of money. It had evidently been lying in the mud for some time, and its owner was completely lost in the stream of passing people who crowded and jostled each other all day long.

2. ’But I’ll go and ask the baker woman if she has lost anything,’ she said to herself, rather faintly. So she crossed the pavement and put her wet foot on the step. As she did so she saw something that made her stop.

3. It was a little figure more forlorn even than herself – a little figure which was not much more than a bundle of rags, from which small, bare, red muddy feet peeped out … Above the rags appeared a shock head of tangled hair, and a dirty face with big, hollow, hungry eyes.
Sara knew they were hungry eyes the moment she saw them, and she felt a sudden sympathy.

‘This,’ she said to herself, with a little sigh, ‘is one of the populace — and she is hungrier than I am.’

The child — this ‘one of the populace’ — stared up at Sara, and shuffled herself aside a little, so as to give her room to pass. She was used to being made to give room to everybody. She knew that if a policeman chanced to see her he would tell her to ‘move on.’

Sara clutched her little fourpenny piece and hesitated a few seconds. Then she spoke to her.

‘Are you hungry?’ she asked.

The child shuffled herself and her rags a little more.

‘Ain’t I jist?’ she said in a hoarse whisper. ‘Jist ain’t I?’

‘Haven’t you had any dinner?’ said Sara.

‘No dinner,’ — more hoarsely still and with more shuffling.

‘Nor yet bre’fast — nor yet no supper. No nothin’.

‘Since when?’ asked Sara.

‘Dunno. Never got nothin’ to-day — nowhere. I’ve axed an’ axed.’

**Excerpt 3**

from *Njunjul the Sun*

by Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor

We come back down to Rhonda’s flat and crash. I’m fighting off that sleep, but. Not wanting to sink into that dark place. Dying is one thing. Getting caught up in your own bad dreams is something else.

Those dreams are taking me over. Every night now, the same. Starts all smooth, crystal clear sea, waves lapping, running, shiakking along the beach, with Cedric, or Rhonda, or my other bungies. Having fun. I’m hearing that girragundji voice and I’m strong and I feel good.

It never lasts, but. It always turns bad. The words go all wongy, the tape gets tangled up in the sound machine. And the dark comes down. Fullas that I can’t see are chasing me. Grabbing me, hurting, rubbing m’face in something worse than dirt. Kicking me. I’m struggling to get out, to get away. M’head pounding. I’m hearing that language, old full language, like some voice reaching out to me. It doesn’t make no sense, but. I can’t understand the words. I’m getting gooli-up. Like that voice’s teasing me, disappearing back in time somewhere I can’t follow. I’ve got none of m’own language. Not just that language from way back, from the old people. But the language of me now, from the inside. I’m trying to call out. I can’t, but. I’m running too fast. I got no words to call with.
Activities ...  

UNDERSTANDING texts from different times and places  

Getting started  
1 Rank the extracts in the order in which they were written, from oldest to most recent. Find the dates for each in the information on page 8.  
2 Give each extract a title that sums up the situation or event being described.  

Working through  
3 Complete the table below, giving examples of the different language features in each extract. Draw a similar table in your notebook or use the 'Insert table' function in Word.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language features</th>
<th>Extract 1</th>
<th>Extract 2</th>
<th>Extract 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fragment sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long, complete sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slang or dialect</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracted or abbreviated words</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue (direct speech)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurative language (e.g. similes, metaphors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Using a thesaurus if necessary, find synonyms for the following words used in Extract 1, other than those given in the annotations.  
   a comely  
   b vivacity  
   c surly  
   d tawny  
   e agreeable  
   f likewise  

5 What are the proper, formal English versions of the following words and phrases from Extract 2?  
   a Ain't I jist?  
   b nothin'  
   c dunno  
   d axed  
   e bre'fast  
   f never got nothin' today  

6 Of all the abbreviated words or Indigenous Australian words in Extract 3, which ones do you recognise?  

ANALYSING and INTERPRETING values in texts  

Getting started  
7 Of the three narrative extracts, which one did you enjoy reading the most? Why?  
8 How do you feel about reading Indigenous words in a text such as Njunjul the Sun? Would you prefer their English meanings to be included as well? Why?
9 Complete the following table by drawing up one in your notebook or using the ‘Insert table’ function in Word. Use a tick to indicate which extract illustrates or represents each value or attitude.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values and attitudes represented</th>
<th>Extract 1</th>
<th>Extract 2</th>
<th>Extract 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The words we use link us to the past.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor, homeless people are an unpleasant sight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Savage, uncivilised people can be highly amusing and child-like.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is essential for indigenous peoples to maintain their own languages.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to teach people from other cultures how to adopt our customs and ways of life.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor and disadvantaged people will be very grateful for any help we can give them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can be confusing to be caught between two cultures and two languages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 a In Extract 1, make a list of the words that refer to native people, including Friday, and the words that refer to European people.

b What do your lists reveal about European attitudes to indigenous people in the eighteenth century?

11 Predict what Sara Crewe will do after her conversation with the starving girl.

12 What kind of person is Sara? Do you find her irritating or unpleasant in any way? Explain.

13 What point is Njunjul, the narrator in Extract 3, making about words and language?

14 Compare Extract 1 and Extract 3. What do you see as the main differences between the tone of the language in each extract?

Going further

15 a Start a dictionary of Indigenous Australian words, beginning with the words featured in Extract 3. Use the library or the internet to search for words. Try to find out which particular Aboriginal language they come from.

b Is it important for Indigenous Australians to be able to speak both Standard Australian English and their particular Aboriginal language? Why or why not?

My view ...

Do you think it is valuable to know how the English language originated and developed? If our language is always changing, how important is it to write and speak ‘proper English’? To what extent is language a product of culture and vice versa?
How can words be used to persuade and promote?
What do you think is the most powerful word in the English language? According to many marketing researchers, that word is you. It speaks to the individual; it makes us feel special and unique and at the centre of things.

Any time we use words, it is with a particular purpose. Every time we pick up a pen to write or we mumble an answer to a question, we are using language purposefully and persuasively. Even complimenting someone on a great haircut is a form of persuasion; we want to be liked, and we want friends to feel good about themselves.

Words can also be used to coerce or to trick people. Forms of persuasion such as propaganda, for example, work to indoctrinate or to make people act and think in ways they normally wouldn’t.

In the dystopian novel Ads R Us, the character Barrett Trent spent his childhood in a remote, protected community called Simplicity. At Simplicity, there are no modern electronic devices or newspapers and magazines. Life is about ‘living in tune with nature’. When his uncle dies, Barrett has to go and live with his Aunt Kara, Uncle Adrian and cousin Taylor in the ‘Chattering World’. As far as Taylor is concerned, her country cousin is a ‘freekoid’, a ‘bleeb’.

In the Chattering World, people eat processed food and are subject to constant advertising. In the words of Aunt Kara, ‘advertising is an indispensable element in our way of life. It educates the public, and pays for so many things we take for granted’.

Dystopian fiction
Utopian fiction represents the ideal world — one that is better than the real world. In contrast, dystopian fiction is a nightmare world, often featuring poverty, oppression and a denial of basic human rights. The term utopia comes from a novel by the same name, written by Thomas More and published in 1551. It depicts a society based on the ideals of equality, social justice and political harmony. The word dystopia was coined in 1868 to mean the opposite of utopia.

One of the most famous dystopian novels is George Orwell’s 1984, which he wrote in 1949. The novel introduced the world to the concept of ‘Big Brother’, a way for the government to maintain continuous surveillance over its citizens.

Claire Carmichael’s novel, Ads R Us, is a more recent dystopian novel aimed at young adult readers.

Dystopian films include The Matrix, the Terminator series and Gattaca.

Search the internet using the key words dystopian novels or dystopian films and make a list of some examples of both.
As Taylor began tapping on various buttons, I said to Aunt Kara, 'What’s Ugly-D to Teen Queen?'

'A transformation program. Ugly duckling to swan, with every step of the process shown on television to an audience of millions.' She showed her even, white teeth in a broad smile. 'Excellent advertising opportunities, particularly for product placement. Thousands of girls will be lining up, hoping to get selected. Countless more will be glued to the screen, watching the program. For companies with the appropriate products, this provides a most desirable teen-young adult demographic.’

It was almost unthinkable to contemplate strangers peering into someone’s life this way. 'How horrible to have no privacy.'

My comment amused my aunt. 'Privacy is an outdated concept, Barrett. People will do anything to put their intimate selves in front of an audience. It validates them, makes them feel worthwhile.’

‘These Ugly-D girls — why would admitting they believe they’re unsightly make them feel worthwhile?’

‘Because a sincere interest is taken in the challenges their imperfections present.’

‘Sincere interest?’ Now I was the one being sarcastic.

Aunt Kara waved my comment away. ‘To be the focus of everyone’s attention is very empowering. Not all of us are lucky enough to be good-looking and socially adept, Barrett. Unattractive girls in particular have a hard time. The program provides an opportunity for selected young women to have access to transformation specialists.’

I didn’t want to hear any more, but I didn’t know how to say so, without appearing rude.

...
‘Doctors, life stylists, and others who are part of the transformation team become famous as well … At the end of three exciting months, Prince Charming — some minor celebrity, so he won't be too expensive — picks the most beautiful of the ten finalists. The lucky young woman is crowned Transformed Teen Queen. That final program is guaranteed to achieve stratospheric ratings.’

…

‘So there’s one Teen Queen, and all the other girls lose?’

Aunt Kara frowned. ‘They're much better looking than they were before, so they've gained something very valuable.’

…

Cousin Taylor broke into my thoughts with the announcement she was starving.

‘You can’t possibly be,’ said Aunt Kara. ‘There was ample food at the wake.’

‘That homemade stuff? Couldn’t eat it. Oh, come on, Mum. Look up ahead. There’s a Cluck Cluck.’

My aunt gave an exasperated sigh, but she turned off the road and joined a line of cars beside a square, purple-and-white building with a huge yellow chicken on the roof. There was a big grin on its beak and its wings were extended like welcoming arms...

She leaned out to speak into a small box, also shaped like a smiling chicken. ‘Cluck Cluck Special for two,’ she said.

‘Any drinks with that?’ inquired a disembodied voice.

‘I want a jumbo Octo,’ came from the back seat.

‘Two jumbo Octo-Kolas,’ said my aunt. ‘And one medium coffee. Black. No sweetener.’

The tinny voice responded in a singsong, ‘For two, Cluck Cluck Special. The chicken chickens recommend! And two jumbo Octo-Kolas. Eight secret ingredients, eight ways to drinking pleasure with its zesty, besty taste!’

‘Is this fast food?’ I asked, having heard of it from my uncle, but only in terms of how the industry threatened the health of the nation …

My aunt had no such negative view. ‘Not fast food, Barrett,’ she said. ‘The term is rapid restaurant. Food-to-go is an enormous industry, every day supplying millions of nutritious meals to families too busy to worry about cooking for themselves.’

Titles, such as Transformed Teen Queen, are capitalised. This is also alliterative and captures the reader’s attention. (32)

Wake: a gathering of people after a funeral in memory of the deceased person (42)

Direct speech includes sentence fragments and colloquial language to create a realistic effect. (43)

A simile (like welcoming arms) creates a strong visual image for the reader. (48)

Disembodied: a voice that appears not to come from a human body (53)

Cluck Cluck is an example of onomatopoeia. ‘Cluck’ sounds like the noise a chicken makes. (60)

Rapid restaurant is an example of a euphemism — a mild expression used instead of a phrase that has negative connotations. Alliteration makes the term catchy and easy to remember. (71)
Actvities ...

UNDERSTANDING the language of persuasion

Getting started
1. Find some examples of neologisms, or new words, in the extract.
2. What are some reality TV shows, similar to *Ugly-D to Teen Queen*, that involve some sort of dramatic personal transformation?
3. Why are these shows so popular? Suggest two reasons.
4. a. What kinds of products might be featured or advertised during the following reality TV shows?
   - MasterChef
   - *The Beauty and the Geek*
   - Sixty-Minute Makeover
   - Undercover Boss
   - Survivor
   - *How Clean Is Your House?*
b. If the Greek word *demos* means ‘the public’ or ‘group of people’ and *graphia* means ‘description of’, what do you think demographic means? Come up with a meaning and then check it in a print or online dictionary.
c. What do you think is the demographic profile of the people who watch each of the shows listed above? (For example, the demographic profile (or demographic) for the television show *Fishing Australia* might be the married, male, blue collar, aged 35 to 65, high-school-educated demographic.)

Working through
5. Find some examples of jargon in the extract.
6. Of the following sentences, which ones would you use to define the purpose of advertising?
   a. Advertising is entertaining and gives us a break from life’s serious issues.
   b. Advertising is all about selling products and making money.
   c. Advertising offers us not just things to buy, but lifestyles and values.
   d. Advertising fills in blank magazine pages and makes television shows last longer.
   e. Advertising aims to persuade us we need something in order to live a better life.
7. What are some of the marketing strategies used by Cluck Cluck to entice people to consume its products?

ANALYSING and INTERPRETING a dystopian text

Getting started
8. What’s your impression of Aunt Kara? Do you find her:
   a. easy-going and open to different ideas
   b. single-minded and obsessive
   c. cold and unfeeling?
   Explain your choice. What other adjectives can you use to describe her?
9. What bothers Barrett about the *Ugly-D to Teen Queen* contest?
10. Do you think Aunt Kara is really interested in whether the *Ugly-D to Teen Queen* contest makes contestants feel better about their physical appearance? Explain your view.
Working through

11 What do you think people in the Chattering World value or regard as important? See how many values you can add to the following list.
- Following the rules
- Public image
- Physical attractiveness

12 Why has the author included the reference to Aunt Kara’s ‘even, white teeth’?

13 Read the definitions of euphemism, denotation and connotation in the Need to know at right. Rapid restaurant is a euphemism for fast food. The literal meaning, or denotation, of fast food is ‘food prepared quickly’. However, fast food also has negative connotations. Why does Aunt Kara prefer to describe Cluck Cluck as a rapid restaurant, which serves food-to-go, rather than as a fast food joint?

14 ‘The chicken chickens recommend’ is a slogan. How do slogans work on the audience for an advertisement?

Going further

15 Find an example of onomatopoeia in the extract. What would be the advantages for an advertiser in using such a literary device? Can you think of any real-life advertisements that use literary devices?

16 Barrett’s uncle was very critical of life in the Chattering World, where ‘people’s minds are controlled, their willpower sapped. An individual only has the illusion of freedom of choice — everyone is a pitiful, brainwashed consumer, all too willing to be manipulated.’ Write a paragraph in which you comment on his view that people are easily brainwashed and manipulated by advertising and the desire to buy.

17 Later in the novel, a teacher at Fysher-Platt Academy, Mr Dunne, causes a stir when he declares: ‘Persuasion in advertising frequently uses many of the strategies employed by propaganda and political campaigns … These strategies include repeating the same message over and over with strong conviction, as if by doing this it somehow makes the message true, deliberate exaggeration, unsubstantiated claims, and appeals to the audience’s emotions, not their intellects.’

a List or find examples of ads in the contemporary world that use one or more of these strategies.

b Taylor and Barrett’s school, Fysher-Platt Academy, is sponsored by Fysher Pharmaceuticals. Teachers wear overshirts that promote the company sponsoring their lesson. What do you think are the dangers of schools promoting companies and endorsing products in this way?

LANGUAGE link

Advertising

Advertising:
- is designed to sell or promote a product
- uses a combination of visuals, words and other messages to grab the reader’s attention
- presents the reader with familiar, usually simplistic, representations
- appeals to the reader’s emotions and desires; for example, the desire to belong to a group
- is designed to be easy to relate to
- uses short, sharp words to heighten the sense of immediacy
- may rely on a slogan to deliver the key message.

Evaluate an advertisement, either in print or on television, at the movies or on a billboard, to see if it conforms to these features listed.
Wordsmith...

CREATING PORTMANTEAU WORDS

A portmanteau is a type of small case that opens in the middle (from the French word *manteau*, meaning ‘cloak’ and *porter*, meaning ‘to carry’). A *portmanteau word* is one that blends two different words. This term was first coined by Lewis Carroll because he created so many new words from two separate words. In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Humpty Dumpty is explaining the poem *Jabberwocky* to Alice. When she asks what the word *slithy* means in the opening lines, ‘Twas brillig and the slithy toves/ Did gyre and gimble in the wabe’, he explains:

‘Well, ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe and slimy’. ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active’. You see, it’s like a portmanteau — there are two words packed up in one word.’

In the novel *Ads R Us*, Barrett is taken to *Shoppaganza*, a word that combines *shopping* and *extravaganza*.

Try to work out which words have been combined to make the following portmanteau words.

- blog
- brunch
- camcorder
- internet

Now create portmanteau words for each of the following combinations.

- education and entertainment
- emotion and icon
- guess and estimate
- information and commercial

Now fill in the spaces in the following paragraph, choosing portmanteau words from the list below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>blog</th>
<th>brocation</th>
<th>netiquette</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tankini</td>
<td>fantabulous</td>
<td>frappucino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fanzine</td>
<td>chocoholic</td>
<td>chillaxing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was at home, __________, and reading Johnno’s _______ to get the goss on the boys’ __________ at the Gold Coast. It sounded ________. Mind you, they have no idea about __________. The whole thing was written in upper case with lots of exclamation marks. By the way, you must catch Pink’s __________. Apparently, she’s a real __________. She loves Mars Bars almost as much as you like a ___________. And yet she still looks great wearing a __________!

OVER TO YOU...

Now write a paragraph that uses at least five portmanteau words. Suggested topics are:

- your favourite hobby
- life as a teenager in Australia
- a great holiday.

See if a classmate can decode your portmanteau words.
The language of propaganda

Propaganda is information, or disinformation, provided by an organisation, political group or government to promote a cause or policy. It uses language very cleverly to make people believe, act or think in a certain way. The purpose of propaganda is to persuade and shape opinion, and this is done by carefully selecting and presenting ‘information’ so that it influences the emotions and insecurities of the audience.

Propaganda is often used by governments during times of war to unite people in opposing the enemy and to strengthen support for the government. It is also used to denigrate the enemy. Over the years, propaganda has come in many forms, such as speeches, documentaries, articles and newsreels (short news films shown in cinemas before the late 1960s). It has also appeared in posters and advertisements, like those below and on the next page.

**NEED TO KNOW**

denigrate to criticise someone or make them appear unimportant; to belittle

---

The poster’s stark message with minimal words immediately captures our attention.

Propaganda during war-time appeals to the emotions; its aim is to make people feel insecure and threatened, and willing to trust the government. The highly emotive word murder deliberately overstates what the woman has done in order to create fear.

World War II posters about ‘careless talk’ depicted women as the most likely offenders, making use of the stereotype of the gossiping female. Stereotypes work well in propaganda because they are a kind of visual shorthand — we do not have to think about them.

This text imitates a ‘wanted’ poster that police use when seeking criminals. This is an example of intertextuality, as the poster alludes to another type of text.

Block capitals and an exclamation mark give urgency to the poster’s message.

The photograph is head-and-shoulders, like a police mug-shot, at odds with the image of an attractive woman. This underlines the message that ordinary people can do the wrong thing.

Although the subject of the photo is attractive, her smile seems a little sinister. This helps to prevent the viewer from sympathising with her too much.

Underlining and red type emphasise important information.

Although the subject of the photo is attractive, her smile seems a little sinister. This helps to prevent the viewer from sympathising with her too much.
The poster appeals to what are believed to be women’s fears and insecurities: that they will be neglected, perhaps abandoned, if they prevent their ‘young men’ from fighting for their country.

You think is in underlined block letters. This confronts the audience: the young women whose husbands or boyfriends may not have yet signed up to fight for their country. The capital letters are aggressive and create an accusatory tone designed to make women feel guilty.

There is also a flattering appeal to women’s supposed need to feel they have influence over their ‘young men’ — it is up to them to convince men to fight.

Some of the verbs are imperatives — that is, they are in the form of commands or instructions, and have an unstated subject (you). Sometimes called ‘bossy verbs’, imperatives persuade people to act: Don’t pity the girl who is alone, Think it over, Join the army to-day.

Underlined words emphasise key words in the overall message.

**LANGUAGE link**

Propaganda

Propaganda:
- conveys a political message
- uses information that supports a particular point of view
- appeals to an audience’s emotions and values
- often uses short, punchy slogans that are easy to remember
- often uses striking, interesting or confronting images that support the message
- frequently relies on stereotypes to convey messages.

Discuss in small groups whether advertising could be classed as propaganda. How are they similar and how are they different?
Activities …

UNDERSTANDING the features of propaganda

Getting started
1 Where would you expect to see a ‘wanted’ poster displayed?
2 Does the woman in the Wanted poster look like someone wanted for murder?
   Explain.
3 Which words are we meant to notice in the Young Women of London poster?
   How are they made to stand out?

Working through
4 To which of the following emotions is the Wanted poster appealing?
   a fear
   b suspicion
   c anxiety
   d insecurity
   What emotions can you add to this list?
5 Who is the target audience for each poster?
6 Explain the choice of colours used in the Wanted poster: black, red and a sepia
   brown for the photo of the woman.
7 What is the effect of having no visual imagery in the Young Women of London
   poster? Would this sort of poster work for today’s target audiences? Why or
   why not?

INTERPRETING the purpose of propaganda

Working through
8 Why does propaganda involve the selective use of information?
9 Do you think the Wanted poster would have been as effective if it had used the
   face of a serviceman or servicewoman? Explain.
10 In the Young Women of London poster, why are the words you, think and worthy
    underlined?
11 Why is the Young Women of London poster aimed at women?
12 In what ways is this poster insulting to women? Is it also insulting to men?

Going further
13 To what extent does propaganda rely on stereotypes?
14 Why do you think women were the target audiences for these posters? How
   would women today react to such a poster?

My view …

Now that you have worked through this section, reflect on the following
children’s rhyme:

Sticks and stones will break my bones,
But words will never hurt me.

Is this true? You have just explored how the forceful and calculating use of words
can evoke fear, guilt or uncertainty. Well-chosen words can also make us think we
want something that we really don’t need, or adopt an opinion at odds with our
own. When have words hurt you? When have words protected and inspired you?

NEED TO KNOW

target audience  the audience
to whom an advertisement is
directed

stereotype  a limited,
oversimplified way of classifying
people or social groups on the
basis of whether they fit into
a certain category or ‘type’
How does language create humour?

We all enjoy a great joke or a witty one-liner. Humour gives us a healthy perspective on life so that we don't become overwhelmed by the serious stuff. Humour also helps us to build relationships through sharing a joke or an amusing story. Humour can allow us to deal with events and experiences that would otherwise be overwhelming. ‘Black humour’, for instance, sheds a funny light on dark or more serious subjects.

LANGUAGE link

Word games

A palindrome is a phrase that reads the same backwards as forwards: Madam, I'm Adam.

A pangram is a sentence that uses every letter of the alphabet: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

An anagram is a word or phrase made by mixing up the letters of another word or phrase: tea cup and cut pea or literate and tree tail.

Can you think up some other examples of each of the above?

A sense of ‘humour’

In medieval times, people believed that the human body was made up of different ‘humours’ or bodily fluids. (The word humour comes from a Latin word meaning ‘moisture’.) The precise mixture of these humours determined a person’s character and personality. The four humours were blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, and they were associated with particular areas of the body. Someone with too much blood was sanguine; someone with too much phlegm was phlegmatic; someone with too much yellow bile was choleric; and someone with too much black bile was melancholic. Some of these words are still used to describe people's personalities today. A balanced person would have an equal mix of humours, which is the origin of the compound adjective good-humoured.

Which of the four humours describes you?

The language of popular satire

Satire is largely a literary technique in which humour is used for the serious purpose of criticising or drawing attention to a type of person, an institution or a practice. However, it can also be found in visual media such as film and television. Kath and Kim, for instance, pokes fun at suburban life. Summer Heights High highlights, through humour and parody, the foibles and quirks of school students and their teachers.

Newspapers and magazines usually include a humorous opinion column that provides some relief from the serious news. These columns may relate to a recent news event; however, their purpose is usually to mock or take a light-hearted look at some aspect of everyday life. Words are used playfully and inventively, and the tone is often sarcastic. Like all good satire, the column on the next page softens a serious message with mockery.

Before you read the article, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.
A lunch about lunch
by Danny Katz

Twenty, 30 years from now, I worry that the streets of Melbourne will be
devoid of all adult folk. Our workplaces and parklands and coffee houses,
empty — every adult Melburnian will instead be sitting in a waiting
room, buckled over in crippling back pain, unable to work, sleep, mate,
waiting to see a physio who isn’t around at the moment because they’re
also sitting in a waiting room waiting to see a physio. All because 20,
30 years earlier, which if I have any understanding of basic mathematics
is about now, all school kids were subjected to a daily regime of Student-
Schoolbag Spinal-Snappage.

It starts at the earliest age: you see little preppies walking to school
with their parents, their frail developing spinal-columns bending beneath
a schoolbag the size and weight of a James Bond rocket-fuelled jet
pack. They’re not even actually walking because the bag is three times
bigger than them so their little feet dangle in midair while their parent
drags them along by the hand, saying ‘C’mon Kayyleb and Xannder,
don’t wanna be late for school, getta move on Faleeeesha-Delllluahh-
Bonniqqqqquua-Lee!’

So what’s in the bag? What do preppies need to carry around that’s so heavy? Lunches: ridiculous over-the-top three-chefs-hatted lunches.
Hokkien-noodle Thermoses, Moroccan lamb tagines, a fold-out Neil
Perry teppanyaki grill.

But these preppies just suffer mild early onset lunch-hunch: with each
passing year of school, the schoolbag increases in size/weight/atomic
mass, so by the time a kid’s in grade five, they’re hauling around huge
chiselled-granite pyramid-sized schoolbags. You see them entering
schoolyards, great long rows of sweating, straining enslaved Israelite-
students, crawling on bleeding knees past wicked Vice-Principal Rameses
II, standing at the school gate wielding his flogging clipboard.

So what’s in the bag? What do little grade fivers need to carry that’s so heavy? Homework. Homework from NAPLAN-nervous teachers: kilos
of textbooks, exercise books, art books containing nothing but scrawls of stick men doing whizzes onto stick men doing plops. And a pencil case the size of a Honda Civic four-door, with every colour Texta in the Pantone colour swatch guide.

But grade-fivers just suffer moderate Quasimodo-level vertebrae-shattering: wait until they reach high school. This is when backbones buckle like a $1.99 wire coat hanger. You see them getting onto buses every morning and afternoon, eyeballs popping out of sockets, neck veins pulsing, lugging schoolbags behind them like Guinness World Record strongmen pulling an iron ore truck using nothing but the pimples on their scrawny adolescent shoulder blades. Old, feeble people offer their bus seats to them, heavily pregnant women jump to their feet and say ‘Please sit, my foetus is only carrying a light, manageable placenta backpack’.

So what’s in the high-schooler’s bag? Now parents and teachers are working in collusion, trying to encourage kids to be the best they can be — making them cart around the entire National Library of Australia on their broken mule backs, and 50 different changes of sports gear/gym wear/weightlifting apparatus, and a physics project where they constructed an actual collapsed nebula that’s sucking in all light and matter in the universe.

My own kids, they come home from school and drop their bags near the front door and the entire house tips on its axis, then they slowly try to stand straight and it makes a gruesome bone-splitting, cartilage-resetting American Werewolf in London sound effect. I yell, ‘Kids! Don’t leave your bags by the front door, move them inside!’ But then I think, no, help them, give them relief from their back-breaking torment. So I try to move the bags, try lifting them, and then say ‘Y’know, maybe we can just leave them here a bit’.

Twenty, 30 years from now, I worry that all adults will be permanently, painfully, speed skater-hunched if we don’t lighten our kids’ loads now — the school bag is a metaphor for the weight of expectations we place on them, the buckles are the constraints on their childhood innocence, the zippers, well, they’re zippers, what else would they be?

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 2010
Activities …

UNDERSTANDING the features of a humorous column

Getting started
1 See if you can come up with an alternative title for this article. Remember to make it catchy and attention-grabbing.
2 What is Danny Katz satirising in this column?
3 Create an illustration for one of the following quotations from the article:
   a ‘making them cart around the entire National Library of Australia on their broken mule backs’
   b ‘a schoolbag the size and weight of a James Bond rocket-fuelled jet pack’
   c ‘You see them getting onto buses every morning and afternoon, eyeballs popping out of sockets, neck veins pulsing, lugging schoolbags behind them like Guinness World Record strongmen pulling an iron ore truck’.

Working through
4 What makes you laugh when you read Danny Katz’s column? How did the writer achieve this?
5 In what type of publication would you expect to find this column? Why?
6 A satirical column uses language features to entertain and engage readers. Which of the following features can you identify in the article? Give examples.
   a alliteration
   b compound words
   c references to popular culture
   d direct speech
   e rhetorical questions
   f hyperbole or exaggeration
   g emotive vocabulary
   h metaphor
   i original compound adjectives

INTERPRETING and RESPONDING to a humorous column

Working through
7 What is the serious message Danny Katz is trying to communicate in ‘A hunch about lunch’?
8 What implied criticism is he making of today’s parents?
9 What evidence can you find that the writer is cynical or skeptical about what children do at school these days?
10 a Why do you think Katz ends with the statement, ‘the zippers, well, they’re zippers, what else would they be?’
    b What effect does this have on the serious point he just made.

Going further
11 You’ve probably heard of the terms ‘helicopter parent’ and ‘hovercraft parenting’. What do they mean? What are some examples of helicopter parenting in the article? What are some real-life helicopter parent behaviours?
12 Why do many parents seem to have become over-protective?
13 Is this column an example of journalesque or is it of a higher standard of writing? Explain your view, using supporting evidence from the column.
The language of literary satire

Literature has a long tradition of satire. The word comes from the Latin *satira* and its earlier version *satura*, meaning ‘mixture’ or ‘a dish of mixed ingredients’. In ancient Rome, a satire was a verse melody. The ancient Greeks were also known for their satirical verse dramas. The term has come to mean the use of wit and *irony* to highlight and poke fun at human weaknesses.

English satirist Jonathan Swift wrote ‘A Modest Proposal’ in 1729. It is his tongue-in-cheek response to the ‘Irish problem’. At the time, all of Ireland was governed by Britain which, according to Swift, seemed to want to ruin the Irish people for profit. A common attitude among the English was that the Irish were little better than animals. ‘A Modest Proposal’ offers a different way of addressing the problem.

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

**READY TO READ …**

- Scan the text below and check the meanings of any unfamiliar words, with the help of a dictionary and the annotations.
- ‘A Modest Proposal’, below, was written in an earlier century, as were *Robinson Crusoe* and *A Little Princess*. Which of the following language features do you expect to find in this new extract?
  - Long, complicated sentences
  - Unusual spelling
  - Old-fashioned and unfamiliar words
- Do you feel reluctant or keen to read a text written in an eighteenth-century form of English? Why?

from *A Modest Proposal*

1. For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland from being a burden to their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the publick
2. by Dr Swift
3. It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms.
4. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country…
5. I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the common-wealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.
... I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most, on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriments and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust.

I do therefore humbly offer it to publick consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine, and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore, one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, encreaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Children are described as though they are livestock. (21)
Pounds and crowns were units of British currency. (22–23)
The writer establishes what seems to be his purpose: to set out his ideas for addressing the problem of too many poor children. (26–27)
We are shocked when we realise what Swift is suggesting, because the writer had seemed rational. (29–30)
Long complex sentences are not uncommon in eighteenth-century texts. (33–39)
The writer’s tone is detached and clinical. By doing this, he makes the reader appalled by what he is suggesting. His style mimics that of other writers at the time who suggested cold and heartless schemes for solving poverty. (33–46)
whereof: an old-fashioned word meaning ‘of which’ (35)
References to weights and prices make the arguments seem to be based on facts and careful calculations. (48,50)
encreaseth: in early forms of modern English, present tense, third-person singular verbs ended in -eth; by the early seventeenth century, these verbs gradually started to take on the modern -s/-es ending. (50)
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING literary satire

Getting started

1. Using a dictionary or the internet, find synonyms and antonyms for the following words used in 'A Modest Proposal'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>modest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beneficial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nourishing</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>humbly</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sufficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seldom</td>
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<tr>
<td>dear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prodigious</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Working through

2. How would you describe the tone of ‘A Modest Proposal’?
3. List all the words and phrases associated with food and eating.
4. What appalling suggestion does Swift offer readers as a way of relieving the burden to society of having to feed so many Irish children?

ANALYSING and RESPONDING to literary satire

Working through

5. How does Swift try to convince his readers that cannibalism is an acceptable and rational course of action?
6. At what point in the proposal do you realise that Swift is not serious?
8. What is the writer’s purpose in representing children as animals?

Going further

9. Write your own ‘modest proposal’ in which you justify an absurd or far-fetched solution to a possible problem in today’s society. You might use one of the problems listed below:
   - the increasing amount of litter in public areas
   - graffiti on public buildings
   - noisy neighbours who mow the lawn very early on weekends
   - mobile phones ringing during a movie or stage play.

LITERACY link

American versus British spelling

Australian English has traditionally used British spelling conventions. However, American spelling is becoming increasingly common as a result of the internet and American software packages. Some Australians are passionate about protecting Australian English so it is not ‘corrupted’ by American spelling.

Some of the differences between American English spelling and Australian English include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian English</th>
<th>American English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colour</td>
<td>color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defence</td>
<td>defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centre</td>
<td>center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programme</td>
<td>program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you add some more examples to this list?
WRITING HUMOROUSLY: MALAPROPISMS AND SPOONERISMS

There are a number of devices at a writer’s disposal when writing humorously. The two devices below have a literary background.

Malapropisms

Malapropisms are named after a character in a play called *The Rivals*, written by Richard Sheridan in 1775. In attempting to impress others with her extensive vocabulary, the character of Mrs Malaprop constantly uses words incorrectly.

Here are four examples of her mistakes, including the word she meant to use, but didn’t.

- *He is the very pine-apple of politeness!* (Instead of pinnacle)
- *I have since laid Sir Anthony’s preposition before her.* (Instead of proposition)
- *Illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory.* (Instead of obliterate)
- *She’s as headstrong as an allegory on the Nile.* (Instead of alligator)

Spoonerisms

A spoonerism is a humorous slip of the tongue. Spoonerisms occur when letters or syllables are swapped around.

Here are some examples:

- A lack of pies = a pack of lies
- Roaring with pain = pouring with rain
- Wave the sails = save the whales.

Spoonerisms got their name from Reverend W.A. Spooner (1844–1930) who was Dean and Warden of New College in Oxford. Apparently he made these mix-ups frequently. He is supposed to have told off a student for *fighting a liar in the quadrangle* and another who *hissed my mystery lecture*. What do you think he meant to say?

Read the spoonerisms below and rewrite the phrases in their correct form in your notebook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoonerisms</th>
<th>Correct Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cat flap</td>
<td>trim your no tails at the lead of spite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad salad</td>
<td>trail snacks know your blows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plaster man</td>
<td>rental deceptionist nicking your pose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pleating and humming</td>
<td>flock of bats mad banners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OVER TO YOU …

Write a short dialogue between two characters. Include malapropisms and spoonerisms in their speech. Use some of the examples provided above if you wish.

Alternatively, draw two cartoons to illustrate your choice of any of the spoonerisms above. Use the examples shown as a guide.
Fighting back with words

We usually associate play with fun and games; however, play is also a serious business. Sometimes, a pejorative or offensive word is re-appropriated or reclaimed by the group it was originally intended to insult. For example, the word wog, referring to people of southern-European descent, was at one time demeaning and insulting.

Australian actor Nick Giannopoulos, writer and producer of the film The Wog Boy (2000), explains below the way wog has now become a term of respect and affection.

In the film, Steve is a second-generation, unemployed Greek Australian whose prized possession is his Valiant car. After appearing on a current affairs show as a ‘dole-bludger’, Steve makes the most of his new fame by re-inventing himself as The Wog Boy.

Steve fits the stereotype of a ‘wog’: he loves cars and girls. The term wogsploitation is sometimes applied to films such as The Wog Boy, for the way they exploit the stereotypical aspects of multicultural Australia.
Activities …

UNDERSTANDING changes to language

Getting started
1 Can you think of words for other nationalities that, though once derogatory (insulting), have been reclaimed and given a new positive meaning?

EVALUATING and RESPONDING to changes in language

Working through
2 a Why do you think the word wog has become a more acceptable word in Australian English?
   b Do you think it is acceptable for everyone to use the word wog or only people whose ancestors were from southern Europe?
3 The word negro is commonly regarded in today’s world as offensive or pejorative. The word originates from the Latin adjective niger, meaning ‘black’.
   a Why has the term African American become one of the preferred ways of referring to black Americans?
   b Why is the word nigger so objectionable?
4 The spelling of words is sometimes altered so that it is more neutral and less offensive to a particular group of people. Spelling variations are also used to identify sub-cultures or ‘minority’ groups, making them feel as if they have a language of their own.
   a Do you know which social groups the following words are identified with?
     Which conventional word does each variant replace?
     ● womyn/wimmin
     ● gangsta
     ● flava
     ● hystory
     ● boyz
     ● ax/axe
   b What values and attitudes are suggested in the spelling of boyz?

Going further
5 Why has American hip-hop produced so many new or altered words, such as the last four in the list above?
6 What might the justification have been for altering the spelling of women to wimmin or womyn?

My view …

What do you see as the power of language?
Is language in itself ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or is this determined by the purposes for which people use it? Why is it language can be used in many different ways, for both serious and playful purposes? Can understanding the different purposes of language teach us about our culture and its values?
**COMPOSE AND CREATE**

**Productive focus: writing and creating, speaking and listening**

*Either*

**Perform a dramatic reading**

Imagine you have been asked to perform at a festival in celebration of the English language. The focus of the festival — *English: Past, Present and Future* — is on different forms of English. In a small group, prepare a dramatic reading of ‘The Twa Corbies’ in the original Scottish dialect.

Before you begin the reading, give a brief introduction to the poem. Sum up for your audience the subject matter of the poem, as well as its underlying themes and messages. Explain its relevance and appeal to today’s audiences. At the end of the dramatic reading, comment briefly on why the poem makes a valuable addition to the festival.

Your dramatic reading should:

- involve all members of your group. Decide which lines or stanzas you will allocate to each speaker.
- include some gesture, movement and action to bring the poem to life and make it easier for the audience to follow
- feature a PowerPoint slideshow of images that support your reading. These might include a medieval knight, crows, a hawk or any visually appealing aspect of the poem. You could also include key words or phrases from the poem in the slideshow.

**Some key points to remember**

- Practise reading the poem, making sure you all agree on how you will pronounce the tricky Scottish dialect words. To give you an idea of what the poem might have sounded like, listen to one of the many recordings online.
- Make sure you also give some thought to volume, pace and vocal expression. You need to use your voices to convey the drama and mood of the poem.
- Use the activities in sub-unit 1 to help you write your introduction.

*Or*

**Create a flyer or leaflet**

Create a flyer or leaflet for the festival, featuring some of the more interesting and striking loan words in English. Illustrate the loan words and include a catchy statement about the ever-changing English language. Refer to the quotations on the opening pages for inspiration. Your aim is to capture the purpose of the festival, and to entice people to come along and enjoy *English: Past, Present and Future*.

**Some key points to remember**

- Remember your target audience and your purpose: attendees of the festival and to inform and persuade.
- Experiment with typefaces, colour and other graphic elements to create an effective and visually appealing flyer or leaflet.
- You could work in pairs: divide the roles and responsibilities fairly.
Multimodal advertising ‘pitch’

Deliver a multimodal presentation in character as an advertising copywriter. Find a print or an electronic advertisement. Imagine you have created it for a client — the company that has produced the product. You are to deliver a ‘pitch’ to your client, convincing the company that your advertisement will be successful in promoting its product.

Your pitch should address the following questions:

● What is the company’s ‘brand value’? In other words, what attitudes and values are associated with the brand? For example, when we think of the Nike brand, we think of an active, energetic lifestyle, which is expressed in the slogan ‘Just do it’.

● What are the language features of your advertisement? Make sure you comment on both written and visual language, including:
  – Language and vocabulary: What slogan have you used? What makes it effective? What other written text is featured? How is language used here? Have you incorporated particular features such as figurative language, emotive vocabulary? Are other persuasive strategies used, such as rhetorical questions, humour or shock tactics?
  – Intertextuality: Does your advertisement include references to other texts or types of texts? Is it important for audiences to recognise these links with other texts?
  – Composition and layout: How are objects and people arranged in your advertisement? What are the dominant visual features? To what is our eye drawn?
  – Colour and lighting: Why have certain colours been used? How do these encourage us to desire the product?
  – Font size and style: What effect do these have on our appreciation of the product?

● What is the target audience for your advertisement? How have you succeeded in appealing to this audience?

● Where would you expect to see the advertisement? On billboards and websites, or in magazines and newspapers?

● What makes your advertisement effective in promoting the company’s product? How does it make consumers want to buy the product?

To support your ‘pitch’, create an appealing PowerPoint that includes:

● the advertisement you have ‘created’. You might annotate this to indicate particular language features.

● a short summary of the values and attitudes expressed in your advertisement. What kind of lifestyle does the advertisement promote?

● any other visuals and key phrases that help to capture the power of your advertisement and engage the interest of your audience.

Some key points to remember

● Draft, edit and proofread any copy that will appear in your pitch.

● Use the features of PowerPoint to good effect, but don’t have too many. Aim for a few effects used sparingly at key points; for example, use colour to create an ‘upbeat’ mood or tone.

● Rehearse your presentation before you deliver it, and have a back-up if something goes wrong.
A humorous opinionative article

Write a humorous article for a newspaper or magazine. The purpose of your article is to provide an amusing perspective on some aspect of our daily lives. Choose one of the everyday topics listed below, or come up with your own.

- A visit to the dentist
- A first date
- A family car trip
- Surviving the post-Christmas sales
- Wearing high heels
- Delivering a public speech
- Training a puppy
- The trend for tattoos

Once you have chosen your topic, work out your central idea — that is, your opinion or point of view. You can choose to add illustrations if you wish.

Some key points to remember

- Using Danny Katz’s column as a guide, use a range of persuasive language features to appeal to your readers.
- Choose language features that will help you to create humour; for example:
  - puns
  - malapropisms
  - spoonerisms
  - hyperbole
  - amusing similes and metaphors
  - sarcasm and irony.
- Identify your target audience and select vocabulary to suit this target audience. Also consider your target audience when deciding which illustrations to include.
- Maintain interest by including plenty of topical references your readers can relate to. As well as your own personal experiences, you might also promote your viewpoint by referring to:
  - popular culture (films, television shows, musicians, magazines)
  - literary texts
  - current affairs
  - politics
  - current social issues and trends
  - lifestyle trends
  - historical events.

Self-evaluation ...

After you have completed your assessment, respond to the questions below as a way of reflecting on your learning.

1. What did you enjoy about the task you chose?
2. What did you find difficult about the task?
3. What strengths were you able to call on in completing this task?
4. How did you minimise any of your weaknesses when completing this task?
5. What would you do differently next time if faced with a similar task?

INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS

Worksheet 1.1
doc-10103

Worksheet 1.2
doc-10104

Worksheet 1.3
doc-10105