



VATE IDEAS LAB: TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE MIDDLE YEARS CONFERENCE

VATE's annual Middle Years Conference has been developed to enrich, inspire and challenge middle years teachers and students through creative approaches to teaching and learning.

Join with us as we share ways to encourage student agency, promote student learning outcomes in reading and writing, develop critical thinking skills and engage with subject English in a creative and artistic way.

All delegates will receive a copy of Maxine Beneba Clarke's book *How Decent Folk Behave* as part of their registration. Maxine's new poetry collection, *It's the Sound of the Thing: 100 new poems for young people*, will also be available to purchase (\$22.99) on the day (card payments only).

TIME:	VENUE:	MEMBER PRICES:
9:00am – 3:00pm	RACV City Club,	Concession \$215
DATE:	Bourke Street,	Individual \$235
Friday 11 August, 2023	Melbourne	Organisational \$260

Reading the World, Teaching the World

Maxine Beneba Clarke

Teaching limericks or haiku can appeal to students with a flair for mathematics. Climate change fiction might be just the right genre to engage students interested in science, or climate activism. Music-loving students might take to reading and writing free verse. Found poems could be just the right thing for students who are usually glued to social media. Spoken word could appeal to kids struggling with writing. There's a literary form and a genre for every student. In this keynote address Maxine Beneba Clarke will discuss the process and choices behind how her works end up as poetry, non-fiction, spoken word, picture book or prose, and the benefits and challenges of writing, reading and teaching across different forms and genres of writing.



Maxine Beneba Clarke is the ABIA and Indie award-winning author of the short fiction collection [Foreign Soil](#), the memoir [The Hate Race](#), and the poetry collections [Carrying the World](#), [How Decent Folk Behave](#) and [It's the Sound of the Thing: 100 new poems for young people](#). Her books for young children include the acclaimed picture books [The Patchwork Bike](#), [Fashionista](#), and [When We Say Black Lives Matter](#). She is currently the Peter Steele Poet in Residence at the University of Melbourne.

Register online at www.vate.org.au

Program overview

9:00 – 9:30am	Registration, tea and coffee			
9:30 – 10:30am	Keynote address: Reading the World, Teaching the World Maxine Beneba Clarke			
10:30 – 11:15am	Morning tea and networking			
11:15am – 12:15pm	Session one Workshop 1	1A The poet in you Maxine Beneba Clarke	1B Using blended learning to enrich student agency Joanna Boer, Ruyton Girls' School	1C Running effective reading conferences Hayley Harrison, Connect Literacy
12:20 – 1:20pm	Session two Workshop 2	2A Inciting learning Sonia Murr, Kilvington Grammar School	2B Using fictional writing techniques in non-fiction Amra Pajalic, St Albans Secondary College	2C Growing critical thinking in middle years Prithi Rao and Robert Savage, Ivanhoe Grammar School
1:20 – 2:00pm	Lunch and networking			
2:00 – 3:00pm	Session three Workshop 3	3A Preparing middle years students for VCE Ashleigh Cavalin and Dee Broughton, Kilvington Grammar School	3B Stories in Miniature Emma Jenkins, VATE Education Officer	3C Artful English at the NGV Jenny Isaac, NGV Educator

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1A The poet in you

Based around Maxine's poetry collections [*How Decent Folk Behave*](#) and [*It's the Sound of the Thing: 100 new poems for young people*](#), this workshop will explore teaching the writing of poetry for the middle years. Maxine will discuss how to engage students with different poetic forms such as free verse, haiku, sonnets and limericks, as well as coming to a love of language through other interests such as song lyrics, gaming or sports. Includes fun poetry writing exercises that can be replicated in the classroom.

Maxine Beneba Clarke

1B Using blended learning to enrich student agency

As we seek to enable our students to have greater agency and voice in the classroom we can sometimes face obstacles in the need for common assessment and consistent reporting to families. This workshop, which is particularly suitable for students in Years 7-10 who have access to electronic devices in the classroom, will present an approach to offering students choice in text selection, complemented by the use of blended learning to enable highly differentiated collaboration for both students and teachers. Participants will come away with ideas and practical strategies and advice for how to use the lessons of online learning to create dynamic and personalised outcomes for students that cross classroom and textual boundaries.

Joanna Boer, Ruyton Girls' School

1C Running effective reading conferences

Sitting down one-on-one with a student with time to talk about reading and to explore reading habits, skills and development...it sounds like a dream. But in reality, reading conferences can become more hassle than they are worth: management of the rest of the class, the amount of time it takes to do each conference, and what do you really get out of it in the end? During this workshop we will look at how powerful reading conferences can be. We will consider different ways to structure your reading conferences; ways to diagnose reading gaps, areas of need and points of extension; and how to write reading goals that are achievable and actionable. We will also discuss ways to deal with classroom management, finding time for them within the curriculum and how to make the very most of the time you have. You will leave with options for mainstream diagnostic tests, reading passages, sheets of reading goal examples and specific strategies students can use to action these goals in your class. Now THAT sounds like a dream to me!

Hayley Harrison, Connect Literacy

2A Inciting learning

Audre Lorde once said that "the learning process is something you can incite, literally incite, like a riot." It's a notion that might seem at once inspiring and terrifying. And while riots might immediately connote violence, we need to open ourselves up to the possibility of a different kind of riot: a riot of colour, imagination, ideas and energy. Is it possible to "incite learning"? A shift away from the dominance of the more familiar, third person text analysis on senior curriculum requires the development of a stronger writer's voice in the middle years. Together, teachers and students need to lighten up a little and be prepared to get rowdy with their learning. This workshop is for teachers who want their students to explore, but with some clear navigational tools; who know they need to spend more time encouraging creativity, but don't know how to do it in a way that is rigorous. It's about taking the chaos out of inquiry and injecting our curriculum with opportunities for developing a really strong writer's voice. One that might even start a riot.

Sonia Murr, Kilvington Grammar School

2B Using fictional writing techniques in non-fiction

By writing themselves into the narrative in their own memoir pieces young people gain confidence in themselves and learn that their life stories matter. It also presents a unique opportunity to hone their writing craft. Combining her skills as an English high school teacher, editor and award-winning author Amra Pajalic has developed a memoir writing workshop teaching how to craft memoir pieces that zap with energy and verve by embedding fictional writing techniques to: vary sentences in writing and create a punchy narrative arc; use powerful adjectives and verbs when describing; incorporate transitional phrases; create images through powerful verbs; use adjectives to evoke senses; sprinkling in metaphors, similes, personification, rhetorical questions; and the power of three to deepen characterisation.

Amra Pajalic, St Albans Secondary College

2C Growing critical thinking in middle years

In the middle years we are often faced with the conundrum of juggling competing priorities. We want to make learning engaging, meaningful and at the same time build towards the assessment priorities in senior years. This workshop explores some ways we can meet these competing demands by building learning experiences around thinking skills rather than mimicking units of work in the senior years. We will provide practical strategies for creating curriculum that finds the joy in critical thinking. Our session will focus on Year 7 and Year 8 English and provide outlines of broader units of work as well as some practical classroom activities that will support you within your existing curriculum.

Prithi Rao and Robert Savage,
Ivanhoe Grammar School

3A Preparing middle years students for VCE

This workshop looks at how to construct middle years curriculum and assessments with the goal of preparing students with the skills required to tackle the VCE. We will focus on how to prepare while still making English fun, diverse and without creating the dreaded replica of the 'mini VCE'. Key units include an analytical unit on Rebecca Kim's *Tiger Daughter* inspired by the work of Leon Furze, an anthology of creative writing on new worlds, and Kilvington Writers Festival.

Ashleigh Cavalin and Dee Broughton,
Kilvington Grammar School

3B Stories in Miniature

VATE's annual creative writing competition is themed 'A Story in Miniature'. Students are encouraged to write stories that are between 300 and 500 words in length, focusing on a single interaction or moment they wish to retell in narrative prose. This workshop will revisit some of the past winners of the competition, unpacking the strengths of each and their suitability for use as a mentor text with your students. The workshop will also explore some complementary teaching ideas for using miniature texts in your classroom to inspire your students to write their own stories and experiment with their writer's voice.

Emma Jenkins, VATE Education Officer

3C Artful English at NGV

Come and visit the National Gallery Victoria! Join NGV educators as they model how to get students to experiment with language, develop rich descriptive vocabulary, and use artworks from different times and cultures as inspiration for creative writing. This program is packed with art-inspired practical activities to take back to the English classroom. The session will be from 2 – 3pm at NGV International, 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Delegates will be met by educators at the Mousehole entrance (north side of the NGV next to the Arts Centre). NB: This workshop is capped at 40 participants.

Jenny Isaac, NGV Educator