

Because a White Man'll Never Do It

TEACHERS' NOTES

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Author inspiration

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Introduction

Because a White Man'll Never Do It was first published in 1973. The book focuses on the experiences of Aboriginal people as a result of colonisation. The content and approach of the book was and still is considered controversial, and the challenges it identifies are still relevant today. Gilbert proposes a number of solutions from the point of view of an Indigenous person: land, compensation, discreet non-dictatorial help and most of all, to be left alone by white Australia. Gilbert writes from a personal point of view, sharing his own experiences and the experiences of other Indigenous Australians. The concepts of justice, equality and freedom discussed and proposed in the book apply not only to Australia but to the rest of the world as well.

About the author/illustrator

Kevin Gilbert (1933 – 1993) was born in Condobolin to the Indigenous Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations. He was an activist, artist, author, playwright and poet. As an Indigenous activist, Gilbert was known for being a founder of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy as well as his most popular books *Because a White Man'll Never Do It* and *Living Black: Blacks talk to Kevin Gilbert*.

Author/illustrator inspiration

Publishing Assistant will ask Author/illustrator for this information

Study notes on themes and curriculum topics:

This text will be useful in addressing the Australian curriculum English objectives for Year 11, Unit 2.

Learning Outcomes

Students will have the opportunity to:

- *Compare texts in a variety of contexts, mediums and modes by:*
 - explaining the relationship between purpose and context
 - analysing the style and structure of texts including digital texts
 - evaluating similarities and differences between hybrid texts, for example, infotainment, product placement in movies and hypertext fiction.
- *Investigate the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts including:*
 - analysing the ways in which language features, text structures and stylistic choices shape points of view and influence audiences
 - evaluating the effects of rhetorical devices, for example, emphasis, emotive language and imagery in the construction of argument
 - analysing how attitude and mood are created, for example, through the use of humour in satire and parody.
- *Analyse and evaluate how and why responses to texts vary through:*
 - the impact of language and structural choices on shaping one's own and others' perspectives

- the interplay between imaginative, persuasive and interpretive techniques, for example, how anecdotes are used in speeches to amuse, inform, influence, or how characterisation is used in advertising
 - analysing changing responses to texts over time and in different cultural contexts.
- *Create a range of texts:*
 - using imaginatively, interpretive and persuasive elements for different purposes, contexts and audiences
 - experimenting with structures, language features and multimodal devices.
- *Reflect on their own and others' texts by:*
 - analysing the values and attitudes expressed in texts
 - evaluating the effectiveness of texts in representing ideas, attitudes and voices
 - explaining how and why texts position readers and viewers.

Pre-reading and Reading Strategies

Students can find working with classic and literary fiction difficult at times. By providing support to the student through pre-reading and reading strategies, students are better able to engage and work with complex texts.

Creating a summary of a text while the students are reading the text will help them make better understand the text. They will also be able to use this information in their assessment tasks. One way to do this is to create a visual representation of the text. A visual representation will help the students to see the novel as a whole rather than in fragments. **INSERT EXAMPLE HERE (does not have to represent whole book) – can just be a model?**

Another strategy which will enhance the students' engagement with the text is to ask them to predict what they think is going to happen next in the book. Predicting creates connections with prior knowledge and assists students to challenge their own thinking about the events and ideas in the text.

Activities:

- At the end of each chapter use a Structured Overview (see Black Line Masters) to summarise what has happened.
- Read the foreword and predict what will happen in the text. As students read the text, compare the predictions with the information, themes and topics in the text.
- Read the Author's Note. As a class discuss what might be absent from the text. Also discuss what the author and publisher might need 'protecting' from (p.xiv).

Literacy and language

Because a White Man'll Never Do It is a combination of verse, poetry, speeches and essays. Each chapter focuses on a theme or topic that is related to the history of Indigenous Australians. The text contains a number of literacy and language techniques.

Imagery and evocative language help paint a picture for the reader by creating a more emotional connection to the content than could be achieved through purely factual language. Imagery also helps to create a strong visual awareness in the reader.

Of the earth am I
The breast that nurtured all the young
Of earth; with earth to earth again I fly
With every thought I thought and song I sung
Was earth and earth in all its bounty
Gave to me and mine a wise increase.
(p. 1)

The first stanza of 'Earth' uses imagery and evocative language to establish the importance of the earth to Indigenous Australians. It paints a picture of the earth as a mother ('the breast that nurtured all the young') and an Indigenous person her child, separate to and as part of the earth.

Activity

Choose one other verse in the poem 'Earth' and identify the use of imagery and evocative language. Describe how the language techniques shape the reader's understanding of ideas and his or her emotional connection to the subject.

Third person narration is the most flexible and diverse approach to literature and text. Third person narration never uses 'I' or 'we' in the text while telling the narrative. Instead, all events are reported in the third person using pronouns such as 'he', 'she' and 'they'. This gives the narrator freedom to explore ideas from different angles and viewpoints, and in a non-fiction text this can mean that more complex concepts are able to be conveyed. Gilbert uses third person narration in the majority of his essays. This approach contrasts to the verses and poetry, which are often written in the first person.

Third person narrative can sometimes serve to distance the audience.

'It is a pity that blacks are not aware of just what has already been achieved.' (p. 65)

In this line, Gilbert reflects on the Indigenous population's perception of the achievements of human rights victories that have already occurred. Because the sentence is written in an objective, third person voice, the statement is politicised. Its sentiment is impersonal and has less emotional weight.

Activity

Identify an example of the use of third person narration in one of the chapters in the book. Working in pairs, rewrite the content in first person voice ('I') and second person voice ('you'). After rewriting the content, analyse and evaluate the effect of each approach on the reader. Identify how the values and attitudes of a text can change when the narrative voice is altered.

Blank verse is non-rhyming poetry that is often written in iambic pentameter. 'Iambic' refers to a set of two syllables where the stress is placed on the second syllable and 'pentameter' means that there are five of these iambic 'feet' per line. Gilbert uses blank verse at the start of a number of chapters. The use of verse is a creative way of personalising the themes and issues, making it easier for the audience to empathise with the people Gilbert writes about. Verse allows for the use of additional literary devices like simile and metaphor.

Lost me baby, that's a fact!
Come and took it like a chicken
Like a calf took it away
An' they called the new Act 'Welfare'
And they took me child away (p.14)

In this example from 'Love? Country Party Style', Gilbert uses the analogy of animals being taken away from their mothers to describe what happened to the stolen generations. This analogy dehumanises Indigenous Australians to the status of cattle and animals, revealing and critiquing the imperialist social attitudes of the time.

Activities

- Identify the literary devices used in 'Love? Country party style' and describe how they made you feel as a reader
- Compare the language features of this verse to those used in the speech by Pearl Gibbs (p.14). Identify the similarities and differences in relation to theme, intent and effect on the reader. Write 2 – 4 paragraphs describing which approach you found more effective and why.

Persuasive language is used in speeches and essays. The purpose of persuasive language is to have the reader agree with the author and in some instances to convince them to act upon what they have read or heard. Persuasive language can use techniques such as emotive rhetoric, evidence and loaded language and anecdotes to encourage a reaction from the audience.

Evidence-based language also aims to persuade the audience, this time through outlining facts. Objective evidence is hard for an audience to refute and can often challenge a reader's existing understanding of a topic.

Activity

Identify one section of the text that uses factual evidence to make its point. **GIVE EXAMPLES OF SPEECHES/ESSAY TO USE FOR THIS EXERCISE** In 2 – 4 paragraphs, discuss how the use of evidence

affected you as a reader. Did it enhance or modify your prior knowledge of the topic and has it changed what you think now?

Loaded language uses words that have associations beyond their face value. *Because a White Man'll Never Do It* was written at a time when certain words used to talk about Indigenous issues held negative connotations. In this book, Gilbert uses racially skewed terms such as 'whites', 'blacks', 'half-castes' and 'full-bloods'. He highlights their discriminatory connotations by employing them to put forward an Indigenous point of view.

Activity

Identify 5 – 7 examples of loaded language used in the persuasive texts. Rewrite these sections using words that are more politically correct. Evaluate the difference in tone. **EXAMPLES OF PAGE NUMBERS OR CHAPTERS HERE**

Anecdotes are short stories that are inserted into the text, or form a tangent to the main argument. They can be humorous or serious. Anecdotes are designed to make the reader empathetic to the point the author is making, or to understand a concept more fully by making it relatable. Gilbert uses a series of anecdotes both as part of the central narrative and in the form of separate speeches, quotes and ideas to engage the audience with the essay.

Activity

Choose three different anecdotes in the text. Identify the language features of the anecdote, the purpose of the anecdote the point it is trying to make. What are the values and attitudes of Gilbert and the person to whom the anecdote is attributed? **EXAMPLES OF PAGE NUMBERS/CHAPTERS HERE**

Questions and Activities

Political speeches tell a story. Choose one speech in the text and retell the events of the story. What are the key words and phrases used in the speech to construct the narrative?

Choose another Australian political speech, for example the Redfern Park Speech (Paul Keating, 1992) or 'the Apology' (Kevin Rudd, 2008). Identify any rhetorical devices. Compare and contrast devices used in the speech to a chosen passage in Gilbert's book.

Read 'Earth' (pp. 1- 2) or 'The Price' (pp.134-5) to the students. Ask the students to close your eyes while you read them the text. After reading the text, ask the students to create a picture/image of the verse, or a comic strip of its events, ideas and images.

In each of the chapters, the verse and the essays that follow are often linked together by theme. Choose one chapter that has a verse to start, for example Chapter 10, and identify what political point or issue Gilbert is trying to put forward. Discuss the language techniques used in the verse and the rhetorical devices used in the essay. Compare the two forms using a compare ad contrast chart (see Black Line Masters). Evaluate which approach was the most persuasive in getting the point of the chapter across.

Create a character profile (see Black Line Masters) for one of the characters featured in the Gilbert's verse/poetry.

The titles of the chapters and the verses have a variety of connotations attached to them. Choose one title from the text, for example, 'Labor's Santa Claus' or 'Love? Country Party Style' and discuss the multiple meanings inherent in the word choice. Does it give you a clue about what the chapter or verse will be about? How does Gilbert use irony in his titles?

Choose one chapter in the text and create a multi-modal text. Use a storyboard (see Black Line Masters) to organise the multi-modal text. The text should include any characters and important figures identified in the chapter and it should make use of the language features in the text. **EXPAND MORE – What is a multi-modal text?**

By using a variety of textual forms from poems to reports, Gilbert has taken a highly sensitive and emotional topic and made it more palatable for the reader to dissect. Discuss.

Black Line Masters

Structured overview

Title of the text

Chapter title	Chapter title	Chapter title
Key concepts	Key concepts	Key concepts
Key quotes	Key quotes	Key quotes
Literary devices	Literary devices	Literary devices
Any other information	Any other information	Any other information

Compare and Contrast chart

Topic One _____

Topic Two _____

How they are alike

How they are different

Storyboard

Layout/screen	Layout/screen	Layout/screen	Layout/screen	Layout/screen
Narrative				
Key quotes and language to be used				
Other important information				

Bibliography

Kevin Gilbert's official website

www.kevingilbert.org

McMillan, Pauline. 'Kevin Gilbert and *Living Black*'

www.kooriweb.org/foley/resources/pdfs/181.pdf

Rudd, Kevin. 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples'

www.dfat.gov.au/indigenouse/apology-to-stolen-generations/rud_speech.html

Keating, Paul. 'Redfern Speech'

www.antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul_keating_speech_transcript.pdf

About the author of these notes

Rachel Ford began her professional career as teacher after completing a double degree in Arts and Teaching. Rachel also has a Master of Education and is currently studying a Master of Business Administration. Rachel has worked as a publisher in Melbourne and Sydney. She currently lives in Sydney where she works as a freelance writer and publisher.