Critical Literacy: Text, Place & Power

ACTIVITIES FOR (STUDENT) TEACHERS AND SECONDARY LEARNERS
NAVAN GOVENDER & SHARON LODER (2020)
Critical Literacy: Text, Place & Power

Programme for the day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12:00 – 12:15</th>
<th>Meet at the entrance of the People’s Palace at Glasgow Green for briefing. You will also have the opportunity to get into working groups for the day (2-4 members per group)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:15 – 13:00</td>
<td>Work through activities 1a, 1b and 2 on observing and researching texts in space (head to the Doulton Fountain in Glasgow Green).</td>
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<td>13:00 – 13:15</td>
<td>Meet at the Doulton Fountain to report back on your findings and experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:15 – 14:00</td>
<td>Complete activity 3 on (re)designing texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 14:15</td>
<td>Meet at the Doulton Fountain to report back on the texts you have found and how they enabled you to produce at least one text in response to the fountain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:15 – 15:00 (onwards)</td>
<td>Select at least 3 locations on the Merchant City Walking Tour and complete the corresponding activities. Once completed, you are welcome to continue working in your groups to complete the final task (see below, on page 1)</td>
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On completing the attached activities, you will have collected and produced a range of texts (photographs, pencil rubbings, written texts, responses to questions, imaginative writing, etc.) Select at least 3 of these texts and upload them to the Field Trip 2 link on your CCL English MyPlace page with a short response to the following question:

How can ‘place’ be used to develop critical engagement in the English classroom?

Guiding questions:

1. What counts as a text?
2. What kinds of reading/writing matter?
3. Do you think these activities have helped you consider alternative ways of thinking about questioning, comprehension and analysis in the English classroom? How so?

Upload your texts and responses (max 300 words) by midnight on Friday, 24 January 2020.
Critical Discourse Analysis for Secondary Classrooms

Any analysis of texts in and out of the classroom should move across three main skills: Description, Interpretation and Explanation. This follows from Norman Fairclough’s (2001) model for Critical Discourse Analysis (see Figure 1 below). While this is an academic field of study, for secondary English teachers it becomes important to consider ways of doing critical discourse analysis as part of the literacy project in schools. That is, how can teaching and learning in the English (language) classroom engage young people with the function, form and power of language to develop their own capacity to read and construct the world around them.

(Figure 1: adapted from Fairclough, 2001)

The following series of activities have been developed to help you consider methods for moving across the three boxes of Fairclough’s (2001) model. That is, by the end of this series of activities, you should have a foundational understanding of what it means to do critical discourse analysis. Thereafter, you can reflect on ways to apply the activity (and its principles) to the secondary English (language) classroom, especially in relation to reading/writing.

**ACTIVITY 1a - Observing texts**

Seeing is a positioned practice (Berger, 1972; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Govender, in press) and is often underestimated. Arguably, it is a vital first step toward any critical engagement.

In small groups/pairs, find the famous Doulton fountain situated in Glasgow Green. Use the following list of actions to help you observe the fountain in detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write down what you see:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• What are the most prominent features?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What do you notice first?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What features take time before you notice them?</td>
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Describe the shape, colour, form, and size of the artifact:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Describe the shape, colour, form, and size of the artifact:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How do you put what you see into language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where do you start your description from? Where do you end?</td>
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Processes of Production & Reception

Text

Description Interpretation Explanation

Conditions of Production & Reception
Draw a simple map of the area, and then annotate it:

- Where is the fountain in relation to everything else in the area?
- How much space does it take?
- How does it fit in with everything else, or how does everything else fit in with it?

Before completing your map, explore alternative viewpoints to get a better sense of how the space has been used.
Explore the materiality of the fountain: Use the extra paper you have to collect pencil rubbings of the various surfaces of the fountain structure
- Using these pencil rubbings, what could you add to or remove from your description of the artifact?
- You may also choose to collect (detailed) photographs.
*Please be careful not to damage the artifact if you opt to complete this activity.*

**ACTIVITY 1b – Texts appear in space and time**

Explore the spaces around the fountain as well as how those spaces are used. Choose any of the following tasks to complete on your own or with a partner:

- Write a short creative piece (poem or prose) describing how people/animals/objects move about the fountain, or how they interact with it.
- Eavesdrop on a conversation. Try to recreate the conversation in a short, written dialogue.
- Start a conversation with someone. Try to recreate the conversation in a short, written dialogue.
- Write an extended metaphor inspired by the fountain and the activity (lack thereof) around it.
- Select one of the figures sculpted in the fountain. Write a short, imaginative piece wherein you place the figure(s) into a situation. You may choose to imagine where they are from and how they came to pose for the sculpture or place them in a more contemporary context to explore how they would react.

**ACTIVITY 2 – Doing some research**

Intertextuality is intrinsic to making meaning (Fairclough, 2000; Lim, 2018) and so is the research needed to make links between texts (Janks, 2010 and 2014). But, questions still need to be asked about what information is available, what does it include and exclude, and how does it position the ways in which meaning can be made.

For this activity, distribute each of the attached sources on the Doulton Fountain to different members of your group. For each source, consider the following questions during reading:

1. What is the function of the text? That is, can you name the genre?
2. What is the main point that the text is trying to convey? Can you pinpoint the main idea(s) in the text?
3. Why would the author foreground this idea/these ideas?

Share your findings with your group members:

1. Are there any common patterns in what ideas are foregrounded across the texts provided?
2. What gaps in the available information do you think there are, if any?

Look for the plaque on or near the Doulton Fountain that provides the public with information about the fountain itself. Compare this with the online information you have been provided.
Activity 3 – Applying a critical framework

The ‘critical’ in critical literacy means unpacking how power (and social issues) are instantiated in texts with the intention to redesign those power relations:

1. Can you name the social issue instantiated in the Doulton Fountain?
2. Re-look at the fountain itself, what features start to stand out now? How is this related to the function of the fountain (text)?
3. How does the form, shape, colour, size, etc. contribute to how the social issue is represented?
4. What is the significance of the fountain being situated in Glasgow, in Scotland, in the United Kingdom?
5. Do your notes on the interactions people have with/around the fountain suggest anything about the visibility of the social issue you have named?
6. Where else in the city do you think this social issue might appear? How? Are there places, texts, that come to mind?

Reconstruct the information plaque from a critical perspective using some of your responses to the questions in activities 2 and 3. How can the fountain be re-represented in a way that makes the social issue that it stands for more visible?

Some things to consider:

- What information do you think an observer of this text needs in order to understand it?
- What information would allow the observer/reader to be critical?
- How might the information plaque you produce engage the observer/reader? How might it get them to interact with the text?
Read through the following explanation of Fairclough’s (2001) model for Critical Discourse Analysis and consider whether or not (and to what extent) the activities above relate to each of the 3 boxes:

Fairclough’s (1989) model shows three boxes, each placed inside the other in the style of babushka dolls. The innermost box is labelled description, the middle box is interpretation and the outermost box is explanation (Fairclough, 1989). Description involves the reader “engage[ing] with the physical text and its use of language. It allows him/her to consider the role of particular linguistic devices, their interactions, as well as their contribution to the whole meaning of the text” (Govender, 2011, 62). On one level, the reader must be able to read the text and, furthermore, access it. And yet on another level, the text-designer needs to consider where and to whom the text will be accessible.

Under the label of interpretation, the text undergoes processes of production and reception (Fairclough, 1989; Janks, 2005a). Here, the text is constructed by the designer after a number of choices have been made: Who is the intended audience? What linguistic devices can be used to address this audience? Who is included and excluded, and how are they represented? The answers to these questions, whether they are determined consciously or not, emerge out of a hegemonic socio-cultural norm for constructing texts and representing people or institutions. Similarly, the reader, in their own socio-cultural context, reads the text under their own set of hegemonic norms. If the two contexts, of designer and reader, are aligned it is probable that the reader will be an ideal reader and thus accept the text without much questioning. However, if the two contexts and their values are not aligned, the reader might ask the critical questions that pertain to power, quite easily, in order to resist the positioning power of the text. Meaning-making, then, takes place in ways that are specific to people, context and time.

This leads to the third aspect of Fairclough’s (1989) model: explanation. At this point we, as readers or even as text-designers, can consider the allowances that our contexts give us. That is, what is imaginable under the hegemonies that function in one’s context? As a text-designer, what representations (inclusions and exclusions) are appropriate? What I am allowed to say, and how? As a reader, what meanings does my context allow me to make? In what ways would it be possible for me to resist the text, and what are the consequences? The hegemonies that cause us to regulate our own reading and designing, that make us regulate the meanings we make from texts, result in predominantly normative texts being produced and reproduced. It is in this ‘box’ that we can consider how power works with the text and the people who interact with texts, as well as what in our history, politics, economics, religions and cultures help us to regulate and police ourselves and the ways we interact with texts.

Through the latter two ‘boxes’ we, as teachers, could intervene to consider what other, non-hegemonic or non-normative possibilities exist – especially when texts (the inner-most box) can be prescribed by schools and government. It is within these spaces that our students and learners can explore different perspectives and ways to read a text, or the variety of options available for designing texts. Furthermore, where normative texts (re)produce marginalisation, misrepresentation and silences, students and learners could explore the possibilities for re-imagining texts in more equitable forms (taken from Govender, 2015, 67-68).

And...
Bibliography:


Merchant City Voices is a series of sound installations formed in collaboration between Collective Architecture and renowned Scottish author, Louise Welsh, commissioned by Glasgow City Council. The project explores Glasgow’s involvement in the tobacco and sugar industries, and contemporary responses to the system of forced labour that it depended on - the transatlantic slave trade.

Glasgow’s location on the Clyde has shaped its development and led to its global significance as the Second City of the Empire. The project arose from a growing unease regarding the celebration of Glasgow’s Merchants’ fine buildings, without a wider appreciation of how these particular buildings were funded and produced.

Seven sound installations have been formed within lanes, secondary streets and bridges along a notional journey connecting key buildings between George Square (Merchants’ House) and the Clydeside.

Key site locations were identified based on their association with the Slave Trade and Abolitionist movement. Each of the buildings and sites where the soundscapes are located were built with wealth generated by forced labour or associated with abolitionism. These include the Gallery of Modern Art (formerly the Cunningham Mansion), Tobacco Merchant’s House, former Virginia Galleries, City Halls, the Tron steeple, the Panopticon Theatre and the Clyde itself on the Calton Terrace footbridge overlooking Jamaica Street.

Louise Welsh wrote seven pieces which draw on writings by Frederick Douglass - a freed slave - and also imagine the viewpoints of the city merchants, slaves and abolitionists. Examples include a roll call of slaves owned by one Glasgow family, a conversation between female abolitionists and the chanting of Frederick Douglass’ call for the Free Church of Scotland to ‘Send back the Money’ gifted by slave owners.

Professional actors, and students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland recorded the sound pieces during a series of intense and rewarding sessions. Sound and light company Northern Light carried out the project’s technical design and installation.

The sound pieces were installed in August 2012 for the launch of the 2012 Merchant City Festival and formed part of a public debate in the African Caribbean Centre.

The project makes the connection between the production of buildings/cities and the economic system that feeds it at a certain time in history. This is as true today as it was during the Empire.

Each piece can be heard at [http://vimeo.com/collectivearchitecture/videos](http://vimeo.com/collectivearchitecture/videos)
Map of installations

1. **Book of Remembrance**
   - Location: Royal Exchange Square/GOMA
   - Running times: Every 15 minutes
     8am-8pm Monday-Friday
     10am-8pm Saturday and Sunday

2. **I never saw my mother**
   - Location: Tobacco Merchant's House
   - Running times: Every 15 minutes
     9am-5.30pm Monday-Friday

3. **Votes for all women**
   - Location: Virginia Court Pend
   - Running times: 8am-8pm Monday-Friday
     10am-6pm Saturday and Sundays

4. **Send back the money**
   - Location: City Halls
   - Running times: On the hour every hour
     9am-6pm Monday-Sunday

5. **Glasgow Calypso**
   - Location: Britannia Panopticon
   - Running times: Every 15 minutes
     8am-8pm Monday-Friday
     10am-8pm Saturday and Sundays

6. **No country, no home**
   - Location: Tron Steeple
   - Running times: Every 15 minutes
     9am-6pm Monday-Sunday

7. **I am their Lord, their Master**
   - Location: Carlton Place Pedestrian Bridge
   - Running times: 8am 10am, 12-2pm, 5-7pm Monday-Sunday
When settlers in North America started cultivating tobacco using slave labour, the economies of Virginia and Maryland were transformed. A small group of Glaswegian merchants dominated the booming transatlantic tobacco trade. Scottish merchants created tobacco trading networks in Virginia, and by 1760 Glasgow had overtaken London as the main importer of tobacco. The influence of the powerful Glaswegian merchants spread throughout the Americas (often buying into estates in the Caribbean). Their most lasting influence can be seen in some of the major roads and buildings in Glasgow. Many of the old streets of Glasgow (Buchanan, Glassford, Ingram and Dunlop) testify to the success of the tobacco barons.

One of the city's most impressive buildings was built in 1778 by William Cunninghame, a prominent Glaswegian tobacco baron. Cunninghame headed one of three major syndicates that controlled the flow of tobacco into Scotland. He developed a string of outlets and representatives in the tobacco colonies, which bought tobacco from the planters and stored it until Cunninghame's ships arrived. Cunninghame's trading system was one of the most efficient and swift in the North Atlantic and it yielded enormous profits.

He invested some of these profits in Cunninghame Mansion. This townhouse cost a staggering £10,000 to build and is thought to be one of the finest houses in Scotland. After his death it became part of the Royal Bank of Scotland, later an exchange for local merchants, then part of the telephone exchange. In 1996 it became the Gallery of Modern Art. It stands today as a reminder of Glasgow's links to tobacco cultivated by enslaved people, and the profits tobacco yielded to the major Scottish merchants who dominated the trade.


Could the roll call of names here be considered ‘poetry’?

Is there anything you would say about the structure of this piece?

Are there any voices missing from this text?

How many of these names are Scottish?
Built in 1770, Number 42 Miller Street clearly has the features of an 18th century villa and became known as the "Tobacco Merchant's House". It is now home to the Glasgow Building Preservation Trust. This is the last merchant's villa standing in the Merchant City. In 1780 it was sold to Robert Findlay, a tobacco importer, who lived there until he died in 1802.

“I never saw my mother” https://vimeo.com/49377495

Consider the children of slave-owners – how might they be received in their home community? How might they be received in Glasgow, in the homes of their fathers?

This landmark is situated in a part of the Merchant City that is home to many brothels and massage parlours. How might the voices of the modern day slave be represented in Glasgow’s slave narrative?

From this vantage point, you should be able to see the huge pink slogan which dominates the Glasgow skyline. Examine critically how this textual juxtaposition makes you feel.
Location 3: Virginia Court and Virginia Street

“Votes for all women” https://vimeo.com/49377496

You are in the heart of the new Virginia Court complex. What associations do you make from the name Virginia that might give rise to some critical reflections in this setting?

Is it fair to assume that women might disapprove of slavery more than men? Why or why not?

Location 4: City Halls

“Send back the money” https://vimeo.com/49377497

This is a compelling chant based on the sermons of Frederick Douglass which relies on rhythm for its insistence and hypnotic power. It might remind you of the Tom Cruise film “Jerry Maguire” whose titular character is known for the charming phrase “Show me the money”. You are standing in the entertainment hub of the Merchant City. The true glamour of Glasgow’s ‘gentrified’ character is to be found here. Consider critically the implications of the profit made in this place.

Is it right or fair to call it the Merchant City? What might be suitable alternatives?

If money is to be ‘sent back’ from Glasgow – to whom, and where, will it be sent? Who pays? Would you consider the city liable for its past?

How would you advise a young person who wishes to research the notion of slavery reparations?

From this vantage point, look backwards towards the University. At the top of this street you will find Ingram Street, named after plantation owner and Lord Provost Archibald Ingram. He and many other tobacco lords and merchants who profited from slavery are buried in the graveyard attached to Ramshorn Kirk which you will see at the top of the street. You might wish to visit these.

Location 5: Glasgow Britannia Panopticon

“Glasgow Calypso” https://vimeo.com/49377499

The World’s oldest surviving music hall. Panopticon means “see everything” and in the early days of the Britannica this included a lot of flesh! We are standing at the edge of a world-famous trading area which runs from here, down Saltmarket through the infamous “Paddy’s Market” behind the High Court. From there, through Glasgow Green, you can cross to “The Barras” which still functions part-time as a market at the weekends.

This place is worth a visit for a look around. World famous artistes such as Stan Laurel, Harry Lauder and Clark Gable performed there (ask your gran).
It’s worth considering the proximity of this architectural gem to the monuments at the far end of Argyle Street (look east, where you will see a tall tower). This place – Glasgow Cross – was the city’s medieval execution site, drawing huge crowds to sights of gore and terror. Similarly, the Panopticon, especially in its early days, hosted a variety of diabolical acts in the ‘Grand Guignol’ tradition – freak shows, oddities and X-rated dance acts. The theatre archive also throws up some impressions of Glasgow’s racist and exploitative past:

Consider these sites as representations of the dark aspects of humanity. What draws us to spectacles such as these?

Consider the aesthetic composition of this area – can you detect high and low art/ gentrification and dereliction/ poverty and wealth in close proximity? Take some snaps of these juxtapositions – you can perhaps use them to reflect critically on Glasgow’s ‘image’ and ‘character’ or perhaps write something creative.

What do these montages tell us about Glasgow?
Location 6: Tron Steeple

“No country no home” [https://vimeo.com/49379378](https://vimeo.com/49379378)

“For slavery to exist, nature must cease to be nature”.

Think about Frederick Douglass’s words here, and look around. How is nature suppressed (by us, by the oppressor), and how can it be resurfaced (individually, collectively)? How do we establish the ‘truth’ of a place?

Location 7: Carlton Place Traditional Footbridge

“I am their Lord, their Master” [https://vimeo.com/49379379](https://vimeo.com/49379379)

You are standing at a vantage point which allows you to see a panorama of Glasgow life. Facing the city, you will see the pyramidal roof of the St Enoch shopping centre and the magnificent St Andrew’s Cathedral, the Centre of Catholic faith in Glasgow. To your left, you will see the railway bridge that connects Glasgow Central station to London. London and Glasgow were the first and second cities of the British Empire at its height.

The river below you was, historically, an essential trading artery. Glasgow itself is synonymous with shipbuilding.

Behind you, facing south, are the grand Carlton Place terraces which fell into disrepair in the early 1900s. Look to your left, where you will see the Glasgow Sheriff Court – a frankly terrifying place in broad daylight. The lost and the broken of Glasgow society converge for a cigarette on its steps every day, often comingling with their legal briefs. Here you will see all aspects of the complicated threads of Glasgow society coming together.

From here, look anti-clockwise along the Broomielaw towards Glasgow Green where you will see the site of the Clutha Bar disaster (at the corner of Broomielaw and Stockwell street). On 29th November, 2013, a police helicopter crashed onto the roof of one of the city’s busiest ‘old-style’ singing pubs, killing 10 people and rendering the venue (so far) unviable.
However, the owners have teamed up with the Victoria Bar round the corner, and have had a mural painted alongside the venue. This has become a bit of a landmark for Glaswegians, who often argue amongst themselves about whether these faces ‘represent’ Glasgow.

How many faces do you recognise?
Why do you think these people were chosen for the mural?
How many of these are Scottish?
Are any faces not represented?

Do think about the context of the bridge on which you are standing when you listen to the voice link. The extract contains very different interpretations of the idea of ‘journey’. Consider the implications of what rivers are able to do: move people; transport things.

“My eyes are no longer mine”: given that this exercise is about ‘seeing as a positioned activity’, reflect critically on what you see around you at this point. Think about what you cannot see. And about what Glasgow councillors would rather you not see. Connect some of the dots.

Think about the voices represented here – master and slave. How would you characterise the narrative that is built up in this piece?

Return to page 1 for instructions to the final activity (and upload)