

2

Gambling representations in Australian poetry

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Activity introduction

Quick summary

Students will be exposed to a range of Australian poetry in this lesson, and will deconstruct the poems with regards to the poet's perspective or stance on gambling in society. Based on their examination of these poems, students will be able to identify poetic devices and how they are used to create effect for the reader. This knowledge will then be used to understand how gambling is represented in these poems.

Learning intentions

Students will:

- Read and analyse Australian poetry to identify the poet's perspective on gambling.
- Engage with complex texts to understand and appreciate the power of language in shaping meaning.

21st-century skills

Communicating

Community engagement

Creative thinking

Critical thinking

Empathy

NSW Syllabus outcomes

- **EN11-1** responds to and composes increasingly complex texts for understanding, interpretation, analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure
- **EN11-2** uses and evaluates processes, skills and knowledge required to effectively respond to and compose texts in different modes, media and technologies
- **EN11-3** analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts, considers appropriateness for purpose, audience and context and explains effects on meaning

General capabilities

Literacy

Critical and creative thinking

Personal and social capability

Stage 6 Syllabus objectives

Objective A

Through responding to and composing a wide range of texts and through the close study of texts, students develop knowledge, understanding and skills in order to:

- communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

Objective B

Through responding to and composing a wide range of texts and through the close study of texts, students develop knowledge, understanding and skills in order to:

- use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context.

Topic

Australian poetry

Unit of work

Stage 6 English

Time required

60 minutes

Level of teacher scaffolding

Medium to high, depending on how much previous experience students have in analysing poetry.

Resources required

- A device capable of presenting a video to the class
- Large sheets of paper
- Appendix A: Student worksheets
- Appendix B: Teacher reference guide

Keywords

Gambling representation, Australian poetry, poetic device, authorial intent, poetry analysis, ballad, ode, Banjo Paterson, Joanne Burns, Been there before, language and meaning, poetic style, shaping meaning, authorial viewpoints, interpreting poetry, conveying meaning, A post-pindaric ode, pokies at the emu/gambling addiction, Rob Walker.

Teacher worksheet

Teacher preparation

Gambling can be a high-risk activity and is a priority concern for young people. Therefore, before conducting the lesson on gambling, it is recommended that teachers and parents read the Facilitator pack. The pack provides teachers and parents with essential information about gambling harm amongst young people and clarifies the nature of gambling-related behaviours and how to approach sensitive topics.

Learning intentions

Students will:

- read and analyse Australian poetry to identify the poet's perspective on gambling.
- engage with complex texts to understand and appreciate the power of language in shaping meaning.

Success criteria

Students can:

- identify and interpret poetic devices in a range of poetic styles.
- determine authorial viewpoints through analysing textual elements.
- discuss representations of gambling in 20th century Australian poetry.

Teaching sequence

15 minutes - Part A: Activating prior knowledge

30 minutes - Part B: Poetry analysis

15 minutes - Reflection

Lesson introduction

Work through this resource material in the following sequence:

Part A:

Activating prior knowledge

Step 1

Ask students what they know about the technical elements and metalanguage of poetry. Collate their knowledge first in their table groups and then as a class on large sheets of paper that can be displayed around the classroom. Students should ensure that they have a personal list of all the terms that are on the class list so that they can refer to them as required.

Step 2

Watch this video:
[Poetic devices – Testament Homecut](#)

Link:
[youtube.com/watch?v=FWwFBGOBAQI&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWwFBGOBAQI&t=2s)

While watching, ask students to note down any devices from this list that were not part of the first activity.

Teacher reference of devices referenced:
metaphor, imagery, alliteration, personification, rhythm, couplets, repetition, stanza, adverbs, adjective, colloquial language, simile, sonnet, onomatopoeia, point of view, hyperbole, ambiguity, turn of phrase, idiom, sibilance, juxtaposition, assonance, iambic pentameter, anthropomorphism, oxymoron, caesura, enjambment, irony, stream of consciousness, pathetic fallacy, play on words/pun, acrostic, blank verse, free verse, conceit, apostrophe, end rhyme.

Step 3

Ask students to highlight any of the devices they do not know, and to find a definition online. All of these devices and their meaning should now be noted in each student's notes as well as on the class list for quick reference.

Part B:

Poetry analysis

Step 1

Provide students with copies of the poems for study. As a class, read Paterson's 'Been there before' and ask students to annotate their copy with any poetic devices they notice.

Step 2

Using Appendix B as a guide, facilitate a discussion with students about the meaning of 'Been there before', particularly about the attitudes of the time that Paterson's poem is conveying about gambling. Ask students what it is in the poem that makes them feel that Paterson is endorsing or challenging gambling.

Step 3

Ask students to construct a range of sentences connecting their identification of poetic devices to their decision on authorial viewpoint.

Teachers will need to ensure that students understand the build-up of double-cross in the poem as it is critical to the effect of the poem. This may require explicit teaching depending upon your cohort and their needs.

Students can use the following basic sentence structure to communicate their interpretation:

- *Paterson condemns/supports gambling through his employment of [poetic device], conveying [the meaning evoked through the poetic device].*
- *Paterson uses both [poetic device] and characterisation to [achieve what in your opinion].*
- *The narrative that Paterson achieves is a result of [what, in your opinion].*

Step 4

Now that students have identified the poetic devices themselves, move on to the effect of these devices on Paterson's work.

1. Break students into groups of 3 or 4 and divide the identified poetic devices up amongst the groups.
2. Look at each of your group's poetic devices and identify what effect you think it has on the reader and why.
3. Then reform the table groups with one student from each group now sharing a table.
4. One student from each group is to then act as an expert on their group's poetic devices and teach the rest of their group so that the whole class has an extensive list of the effect of different poetic devices from the poem.

Groups should be focused on:

- What is Paterson's viewpoint on gambling throughout the work?
- What is the effect of their particular poetic device/s on the work?
- Is this a one off or is the device used throughout the work?
- How might the reader interpret the work (there could be a range of ways)?

Conclude this step by asking students to consider and respond to the following statement:

Why do you think Paterson chose to present his views on gambling through a poem rather than a short story?

Step 5

Repeat Steps 1-3 using Rob Walker's 'Pokies at the emu/gambling addiction'.

Reflection

Ask students to reflect on their work from this lesson, focusing on the following points:

- 1. What are the similarities between the ways in which gambling is represented in the poems?*
- 2. What are the differences between the ways in which gambling is represented in the poems?*
- 3. Why is poetry such a powerful medium for communicating meaning?*

Differentiation

Students could work in predetermined groups to support their ideas about the poetry.

Students may require extended support or explicit teaching surrounding poetic devices and their effects.

Extension - Students could be tasked with constructing their own poetry reflecting their perspective about gambling, using the devices explored in this lesson.

Students could deconstruct and analyse a poem of their choice concerning gambling.

Students could analyse Kenny Rogers 'The Gambler' to see if lyrics set to music might affect the interpretation of words differently to simply reading a poem.

Students could collaborate and determine why, in their opinion, Walker's poem was marketed in the manner it was for publication.

Teacher reflection

Take this opportunity to reflect on your own teaching:

What did you learn about your teaching today?

What worked well?

What didn't work so well?

What would you share?

Where to next?

How are you going to get there?

Appendix A

Been there before – Banjo Paterson

There came a stranger to Walgett town,
To Walgett town when the sun was low,
And he carried a thirst that was worth a crown,
Yet how to quench it he did not know;
But he thought he might take those yokels down,
The guileless yokels of Walgett town.

They made him a bet in a private bar,
In a private bar when the talk was high,
And they bet him some pounds no matter how far
He could pelt a stone, yet he could not shy
A stone right over the river so brown,
The Darling river at Walgett town.

He knew that the river from bank to bank
Was fifty yards, and he smiled a smile
As he trundled down, but his hopes they sank,
For there wasn't a stone within fifty mile;
For the saltbush plain and the open down
Produce no quarries in Walgett town.

The yokels laughed at this hopes o'erthorn,
And he stood awhile like a man in a dream;
Then out of his pocket he fetched a stone,
And pelted it over the silent stream –
He had been there before; had wandered down
On a previous visit to Walgett town.

Link: allpoetry.com/Been-There-Before

‘Pokies at the emu / gambling addiction’– Rob Walker

CREDIT BET WIN

you enter the opulence a winner

carpets are soft faces hard
gold scintillates under halogen
smoke in coils frittered ceilingward
extracted from your pockets
of air
to a reflective vault

All smoke and mirrors.
cigarette butts are twisted polio legs
writhing in their own ash
joyful rising cadences overflow electronic calliopes
in the Key of Triumph Major
winning forte
(the crash of cash)
losing pianissimo

envious eyes dart sideways at lucky bastards
the coffee is free
but you're detained

a Wild Thing with Mystic Power, an Aristocrat in a world beyond day beyond night
beyond spouse beyond your Home and kids
it seems, beyond The World

Appendix A

But at dream's waking you must return to
Debt Lies Guilt
your life a spinning chocolate wheel
past the glass case of prizes
step out into the poverty
of carpark darkness

and the silent
desperation
of loss

Link: robwalkerpoet.com/?page_id=627

Appendix B

Teacher reference guide to poems for analysis

<i>Been there before</i> Andrew Barton “Banjo” Paterson	
<p>There came a stranger to Walgett town, To Walgett town when the sun was low, And he carried a thirst that was worth a crown, Yet how to quench it he did not know; But he thought he might take those yokels down, The guileless yokels of Walgett town.</p> <p>They made him a bet in a private bar, In a private bar when the talk was high, And they bet him some pounds no matter how far He could pelt a stone, yet he could not shy A stone right over the river so brown, The Darling river at Walgett town.</p> <p>He knew that the river from bank to bank Was fifty yards, and he smiled a smile As he trundled down, but his hopes they sank, For there wasn't a stone within fifty mile; For the saltbush plain and the open down Produce no quarries in Walgett town.</p> <p>The yokels laughed at this hopes o'erthown, And he stood awhile like a man in a dream; Then out of his pocket he fetched a stone, And pelted it over the silent stream – He had been there before; had wandered down On a previous visit to Walgett town.</p>	<p>Form: Ballad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Narrow in focus, one dramatic event.- Little exposition.- No clear narrator - the personality and feelings of the narrator is hidden through third person perspective. <p>Rhyme Scheme: ABABCC</p> <p>Four stanzas</p> <p>About: The poem describes a person coming to the town of Walgett, with the view of hustling the locals, viewed as “guileless yokels”. A bet is made about how far the stranger could throw a stone across the Darling River, with the locals knowing full well that there were no stones there to throw. But the stranger had come prepared, with a stone in his pocket, as it is revealed this was not his first visit to Walgett town.</p> <p>Discuss: It would be interesting to discuss with students whether they think the man had been tricked before in the past, or whether there is something else motivating his behaviour.</p> <p>Metaphor: “and he carried a <i>thirst</i>”</p> <p>Repetition: “<i>Walgett town</i>”, “<i>in a private bar</i>”, “<i>the river</i>”, “<i>yokels</i>”.</p>

Pokies at the emu / gambling addiction

Rob Walker

you enter the opulence a winner
 carpets are soft faces hard
 gold scintillates under halogen
 smoke in coils frittered ceilingward
 extracted from your pockets
 of air
 to a reflective vault
 All smoke and mirrors.
 cigarette butts are twisted polio legs
 writhing in their own ash
 joyful rising cadences overflow electronic calliopes
 in the Key of Triumph Major
 winning forte
 (the crash of cash)
 losing pianissimo
 envious eyes dart sideways at lucky bastards
 the coffee is free
 but you're detained
 a Wild Thing with Mystic Power, an Aristocrat in a
 world beyond day beyond night
 beyond spouse beyond your Home and kids
 it seems, beyond The World
 But at dream's wakening you must return to
 Debt Lies Guilt
 your life a spinning chocolate wheel
 past the glass case of prizes
 step out into the poverty
 of carpark darkness
 and the silent
 desperation
 of loss

Have students consider:

- Locate and find meaning behind any unknown terms or words.
- The choice of beginning line.
- Juxtaposition of carpet and faces.
- Use of punctuation or lack thereof.
- How imagery is developed.
- What stereotypes are used and how they are utilised.
- The use of 'winning' language.
- When the tone of the poem shifts and how this is achieved.
- What they think Walker's final message to the reader is and why.
- Do students think that a person's personal experiences might shape how this poem is read?