

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect. The shapes are primarily triangular and polygonal, with some areas appearing more translucent than others.

Critical literacy in theory and practice

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Workshop overview

- ▶ Critical literacy: An overview
- ▶ Critical literacy as an absence in the New Zealand context
- ▶ Critical literacy as a component of the English teacher's professional identity
- ▶ Critical literacy in the secondary-school classroom: Step by step
- ▶ Conclusion



Critical literacy: An overview

- ▶ Links to a socio-cultural view of language, critical theory, critical language awareness, CDA;
- ▶ All texts, using a range of linguistic devices, seek to position readers to view the world in a particular way. **All texts are opaque.**
- ▶ Each reader brings to the act of reading a set of discursive lenses, each of which will interact with the discursive designs of a text in a particular way, ranging from submission to resistance.
- ▶ **Discourse:** “A practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64).
- ▶ A powerful complement to deconstructive reading is deconstructive writing. Such a strategy involves the production of a text that *disrupts* or *contaminates* one or more discourses in the text to be resisted by producing versions framed by alternative, sometimes marginalised discourses.

Critical literacy as an absence in the New Zealand context

Thinking critically and critical literacy are not synonyms

While critical literacy and thinking critically are related, they are not synonyms. Thinking critically “involves analysing and interpreting meanings... considering[ing] different perspectives and the different intentions of texts... [and] think[ing] about the impact that the text is intended to have on the audience” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 25). Without explicit attention to the power of texts to shape our thinking, actions and views of the world, thinking critically as described in New Zealand documents, will not develop critical literacy.

English 3.7A for Achievement Standard 91478 [Text in Time]

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Respond critically to significant connections across texts, supported by evidence.	Respond critically and convincingly to significant connections across texts, supported by evidence.	Respond critically and perceptively to significant connections across texts, supported by evidence.

2 *Respond critically* involves making evaluative interpretations and judgements.

Respond critically and convincingly involves making discerning and informed interpretations and judgements.

Respond critically and perceptively involves making sophisticated and insightful and/or original interpretations and judgements.

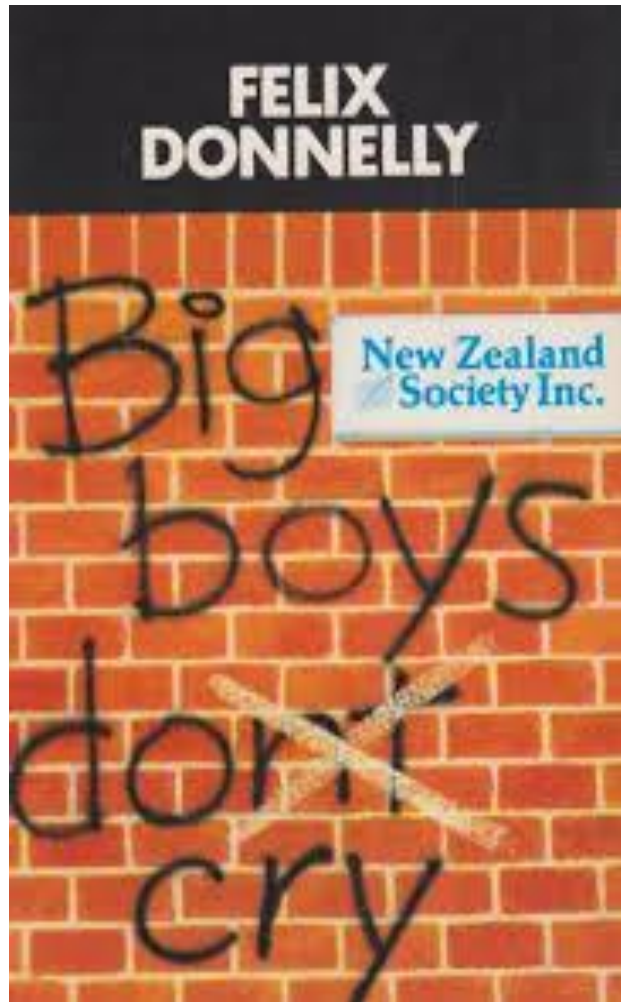
3 *Significant* refers to how aspects and interpretations of the text create meaning.

Critical literacy as a component of the English teacher's professional identity



The stories we tell, matter.
Where do they come from?

Constructing “masculinity” in Aotearoa/New Zealand



Toby Morris (2015). [The Pencilword: Goodbye Old Zealand](#)

Self-reflexivity...

...is different from self-reflection. Self-reflexivity is a conscious attempt to identify the discourses we “subscribe to”. Because we have been acculturated into what we think of as “common sense” stories about the world (*naturalisation*), this can be hard work.



Discourses of professionalism (Locke, 2001)

Managerial professionalism

A teaching professional tailors their classroom teaching to the demands of the national curriculum, manages their range of students well and documents their achievements and difficulties clearly for public accountability purposes. This teacher is efficient and effective in enabling their students to achieve the standardised outcomes established by the national English curriculum and in themselves achieving the professional standards for experienced classroom teachers established by the Ministry of Education.

Classic professionalism

A teaching professional is expert by virtue of their possession of a broad knowledge of the theory and skilful practice of English teaching. They are committed to the individual well-being of each of their students and to the development in their students of a range of literacy skills. Such a teacher values his or her autonomy and views it as essential to have the freedom to make his or her own judgments with regard to appropriate practice in many situations. They are prepared to speak out on broad matters of educational policy and social justice.

Discourses of English



► Cultural

heritage:

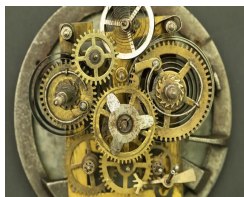
There is a traditional body of knowledge (including a canon of precious texts and grammatical knowledge) which is to be valued and inculcated as a means of "rounding out" learners so that they become fully participating and discriminating members of a society or culture that is often promoted at the expense of groups, communities or discourses that would threaten its homogeneity or sense of superiority.



► Personal

growth:

This is sometimes called the New English (Green, 1997) or "progressive" English (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). It is valuable to engage in literary and language-centred enterprises because this facilitates the personal, individual growth of learners, for whom the acquisition of certain linguistic competencies will play a central role in their ongoing capacity to make sense of their world.



► Textual

and

sub-textual

skills:

At its worst, this promotes a decontextualised knowledge about language and the acquisition of grammatical skills based on narrow and formulaic definitions of correctness. On the other hand, such an emphasis can also mean valuing the mastery of the forms and conventions of a range of genres deemed to be socially significant – an approach which is related to but significantly different from the linguistic table manners promoted by traditional grammar.



► Critical

practice:

Often called "critical literacy", this emphasis puts a value on encouraging language-users to see themselves as engaged in textual acts which are part of a wider set of discursive practices that actively produce and sustain patterns of dominance and subordination in the wider society and offer members of society prescribed subject positions (or ways of self-identifying) (Locke, 2000).

....from the English essence statement

- By understanding how language works, students are equipped to make appropriate language choices and apply them in a range of contexts. Students learn to deconstruct and critically interrogate texts in order to understand the power of language to **enrich and shape their own and others' lives**.

(Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 18)

- How might we rewrite the part in red to reflect a critical literacy discourse?

Are we heading in the right direction?

Critical thinking, critical literacy, *critical awareness*....?

“Learners develop a **critical awareness** that enables them to consider who wrote a text, for whom, why and whether it may have purposes that are not immediately apparent”

(Ministry of Education, 2020).

Significant Learning:

Learners:

- develop a critical awareness that enables them to consider who wrote a text, for whom, why and whether it may have purposes that are not immediately apparent.

Big Idea: Learners read critically

Learners develop a critical awareness that enables them to consider who wrote a text, for whom, why and whether it may have purposes that are not immediately apparent. This means that they:

- ✓ understand that writers of texts are influenced by their culture, values, beliefs, and sense of identity.
- ✓ use the above understanding to identify a writer's point of view, their purpose for writing, and the language techniques the writer has used.
- ✓ begin to reflect critically on the explicit and implicit messages in the text, as well as how they have been presented by the writer to the audience.
- ✓ think about the background knowledge and experiences of the writer of the text when they assess the credibility of informational texts.



So what?

Who is missing here?

Analyses is locked in time?
Lack of explicit reader and audience positioning?
Consideration around the choice, impact, and *reach* of the text produced?
Space for '*critical awareness*' when writing?

[then and now?]
[how does the text challenge you?]
[whose authority?]
[how do we speak back to discourse?]



Writing

Big Idea 1:
Learners write meaningful texts for different purposes and audiences.

Significant Learning

Learners:

- use strategies within a writing process to plan and create texts.
- select content, text structure and language choices appropriate to purpose and audience.
- select and use vocabulary that is specific to their topic, purpose and audience.
- revise and edit their work.

Big Idea 2:
Learners use language conventions appropriately to support communication.

Significant Learning:

Learners:

- develop their expertise in sentence construction, grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice.



Kōrero Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

Have your say about
the future of education.

Using language, symbols, and text

Learners are competent users of language, symbols and texts. They recognise how their choices affect people's understanding and the ways in which people respond to communications.

Space for '*critical literacy* when writing?

[how do we speak back to discourse?]

Relating to others

Through writing, learners interact effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. They can share their ideas, and are aware of how their words can affect others.

Critical Literacy Flow Diagram

1. Personal Positioning on topic

What is my relationship to a particular topic or genre?

What has informed my values and how might it inform my reading?

2. Discourse(s) within text construction

What does this text want me to believe about this topic?

Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position represented in the text?

4. Speaking to and beyond discourses

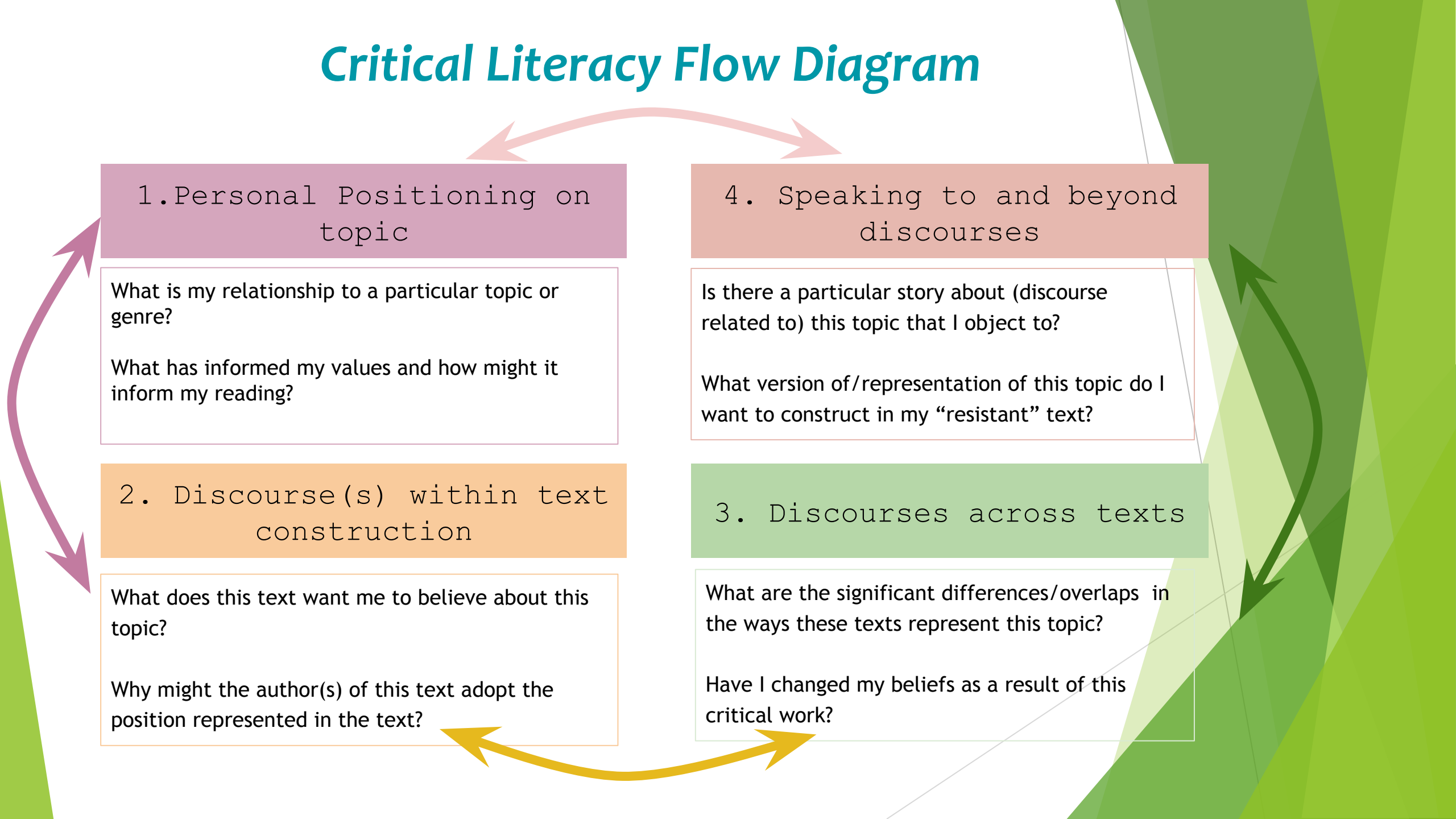
Is there a particular story about (discourse related to) this topic that I object to?

What version of/representation of this topic do I want to construct in my “resistant” text?

3. Discourses across texts

What are the significant differences/overlaps in the ways these texts represent this topic?

Have I changed my beliefs as a result of this critical work?



Critical Literacy - Discourses and Representation.

Step 1: Initial reflection on the topic [students]

Establishing and exploring students' relationships with a topic/issue.

What is a hero?
How do you use social media?
What is one of the greatest challenges we face today?
What is failure?
How does it use you?
What does it mean to be a New Zealander, today?

What does representation as/of Māori mean to you?

1. Personal Positioning

What is my relationship to a particular topic or genre?

What has informed my values and how might it inform my reading?



Some guiding question prompts

What does representation as/of Māori mean to you?

- ▶ What do I believe about this topic?
- ▶ What story do I tell about this topic?
- ▶ Where does my story come from?

Step 2: Identifying how a text represents/constructs a topic (1)

2. Discourse(s) within text construction

What does this text want me to believe about this topic?

Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position represented in the text?



LAWN TENNIS IN MAORILAND: THE FIRST NEW YEAR TOURNAMENT

Some guiding question prompts

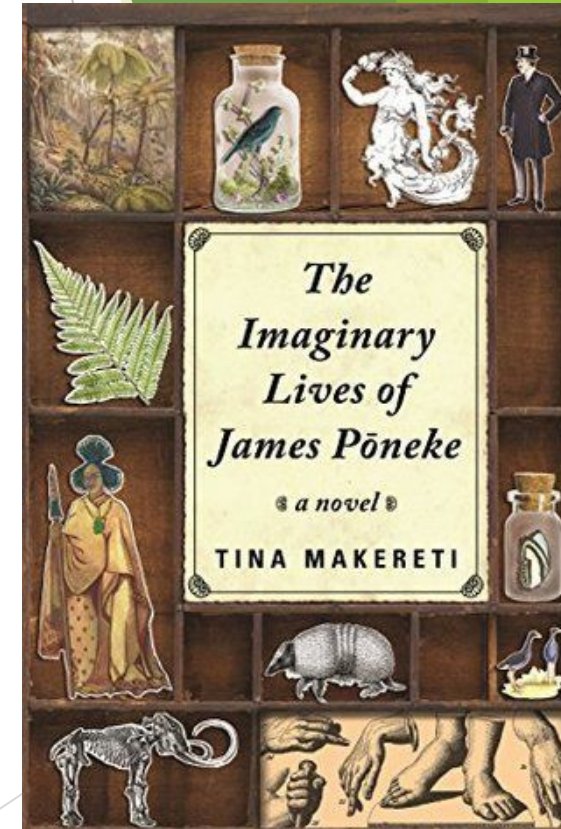
- ▶ What story does this text tell about this topic?
- ▶ What does this text want me to believe about this topic?
- ▶ Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position represented in the text?
- ▶ How does this text position me to think this way about this topic? (Language features)



Identifying how a text represents/constructs a topic (2)

Tina Makareti (2018), *The Imaginary Lives of James Pōneke*.

What is whakapapa? It is a magnificent cloak that connects each person around the fire to each other person and the places they are from. It is kinship to the mountains and waters and lands. It is who one is, who one is connected to, who one's ancestors are. (p. 51)

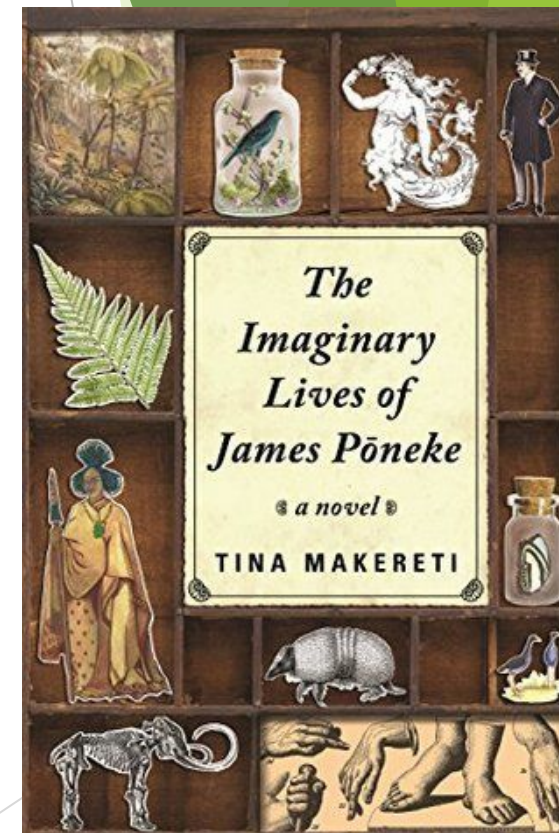


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- ▶ What story does this text tell about this topic?
- ▶ What does this text want me to believe about this topic?
- ▶ Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position represented in the text?
- ▶ How does this text position me to think this way about this topic? (Language features)

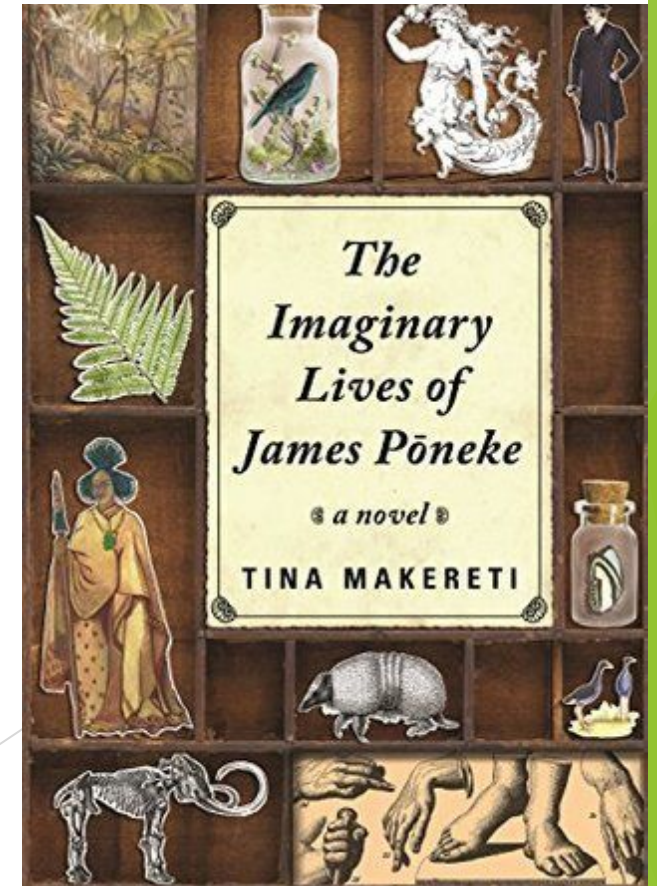


Step 3: Compare and contrast textual representations

- ▶ Is there overlap in the ways these texts represent this topic?
- ▶ What are the significant differences in the ways these texts represent this topic?
- ▶ Which version or representation of this topic am I most sympathetic to?
- ▶ Do any of these texts appear to be convincingly authoritative?
- ▶ Have I changed my own beliefs about this topic as a result of this critical work?



LAWN TENNIS IN MAORILAND: THE FIRST NEW YEAR TOURNAMENT



Step 4: Producing a text that challenges a particular story about this topic, e.g. Māori tennis

- ▶ Is there a particular story about (discourse related to) this topic that I object to?
- ▶ What version of/representation of this topic do I want to construct in my “resistant” text?
- ▶ What is the audience for my proposed text and how will that influence my “pitch”?
- ▶ What genre or text-type will I produce?



1. Personal Positioning on topic

What do I believe about this topic?

Where does my story come from?

4. Speaking to and beyond discourses

Is there a particular story about (discourse related to) this topic that I object to?

What is the audience for my proposed text and how will that influence my “pitch”?

What version of /representation of this topic do I want to construct in my “resistant” text?

What genre or text-type will I produce?

Text A

What does this text want me to believe about this topic?
How does it attempt this?

Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position
represented in the text?

2. Discourse(s) within text construction

What does this text want me to believe about this topic?
How does it attempt this?

Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position
represented in the text?

Text B

3. Discourses across texts

What are the similarities and or differences in the ways
these texts represent this topic?

Which voice or representation of this topic do I relate
more to, why? How might they relate to the world today?

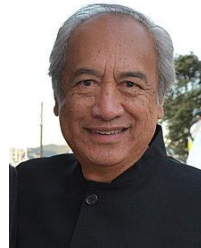
Do any of these texts appear with greater or less
power/authority? Why?

Have either of these texts challenges my understanding or
values in relation to this topic?

What Opportunities for Creating Meaning with Critical Literacy looks like

SPEAKING BACK TO COLONIAL DISCOURSES THROUGH POETIC TEXT

Dinner with the Cannibal



I wondered if he was right, after all why yearn
For language and culture already taken, why fight it?
Where does Maoritanga fit in this world of teenage mutant Ninja turtles?
Yet I did protest and fight as he cut through the middle
Of my heart and, seeing that rich blood flow red as a river
Wondered if there was time to escape this dinner

Witi Ihimaera (1992)

SPEAKING TO MIGRANT DISCOURSES TODAY THROUGH SPOKEN WORD

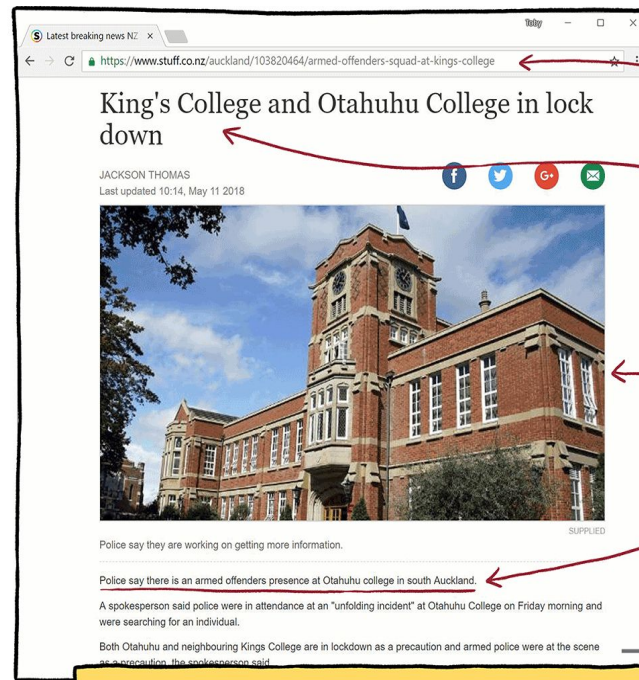
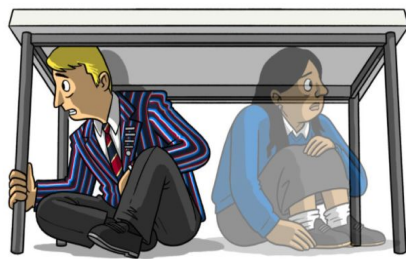
Maybe I was blinded by the neon sign of opportunity,
failed to read the fine print that read: “assimilate or go
back where you came from”.



Takunda Muzondiwa (2019). [Spoken word poem about racism in New Zealand clocks half a million views](#)

Another author's *resistance* text to media discourses of representation

SPEAKING BACK TO CLASSIST DISCOURSES THROUGH GRAPHIC TEXT



KING'S

KING'S

KING'S

HUH?

10.14am: The Stuff story gets updated. The headline has changed, and Ōtāhuhu College now enters the story for the first time. The story states the armed police are actually at Ōtāhuhu College, but the headline still lists King's first, the photo is of King's, and the URL still shows the original King's only headline.

ONE AUTHOR'S NARRATIVE OF PERSONAL AND CULTURAL SELF-DETERMINATION



Conclusion

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- ❑ Critical Literacy can be implemented as part of your practice at all curriculum levels.
- ❑ It should be considered as a tool for both making and creating meaning through multimodal texts.
- ❑ Critical Literacy provides an answer to 'so what?' in terms of our subject and learning focus.
- ❑ Success in developing critical literacy among our students first depends on an explicit link between it and our own professional identity as English Teachers.

For your kete:

- ❑ [Critical Literacy Flow Handout](#)
- ❑ [A3 Template](#)



ZHENG YU-TI



Freedom to? Freedom from?

Critical literacy flow diagram

Step 1: Initial reflection on the topic

- ☐ What do I believe about this topic?
- ☐ What story do I tell about this topic?
- ☐ Where does my story come from?

Step 2: Identify how a text represents this topic

- ☐ What story does this text tell about this topic?
- ☐ What does this text want me to believe about this topic?
- ☐ Why might the author(s) of this text adopt the position represented in the text?
- ☐ How does this text position me to think this way about this topic? (Language features)

*Repeat Step 2 for one or more other texts

Step 3: Compare and contrast textual representations [Derek]

- ☐ Is there overlap in the ways these texts represent this topic?
- ☐ What are the significant differences in the ways these texts represent this topic?
- ☐ Which version or representation of this topic am I most sympathetic to?
- ☐ Do any of these texts appear to be convincingly authoritative?
- ☐ Have I changed my own beliefs about this topic as a result of this critical work?

Step 4: Producing a text that challenges a particular story about this topic [Terry]

- ☐ Is there a particular story about (discourse related to) this topic that I object to?
- ☐ What version of/representation of this topic do I want to construct in my "resistant" text?
- ☐ What is the audience for my proposed text and how will that influence my "pitch"?
- ☐ What genre or text-type will I produce?

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