Teaching the ‘big ideas’ around your Framework idea

## Overview

The VCE English and EAL Study Design states that “the Framework of Ideas presents four broad ideas through which students can engage with writing” (page 22). These “broad” ideas are intended to be the starting point for student engagement and writing and are intended to be “develop[ed]” through “additional texts relevant to the key idea” (page 22). Therefore, students are encouraged to see their Framework idea in a complex manner and not to settle for a single interpretation of the Framework.

The elaborations provided on page 22 of the Study Design offer a wide range of interpretations of the key idea and are good starting points to get students to think about the implications of their Framework idea. These starting ideas are the basis for all of the student writing that will be produced and thus it is important to encourage students to think in a broad and complex manner about their Framework, rather than in a narrow or self-focused way.

Starting points

##### To encourage students to think in a critical and complex way about the Framework idea that they will write about, lessons that take place early on in Unit 3 should propose ideas to students that they can start to engage with (see sample lesson plan for each Framework). Beyond this, students should also be encouraged to think about how they might respond to or resolve the questions that the Framework idea raises.

##### The following questions could be used to frame early writing tasks where students begin to grapple with big ideas. The questions are drawn from the elaborations on page 22 of the Study Design.

#### Introducing complex thinking around Framework ideas

#### **Writing about country**

Exploration of place and belonging.

Explorations of physical land and country, local and international, loss of country and dispossession, remembering country and nostalgia, migration, the power of connections with land, climate change and the changing landscape, and imagined countries.

##### Students could engage with experiences like farming and land management, and with cultural expressions like country music. Others could explore traditional understandings of Country through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives.

*These big ideas could be framed as a series of questions that form the basis for early writing:*

* What does it mean to belong to a place rather than having a place belong to you?
* Can true belonging to a place exist without a sense of ownership?
* How might a person’s identity change if they see the land as an extension of themselves?
* If country is part of who we are, what happens to our sense of self when the land is altered, re-named or removed?
* Can land have rights, and if so, what responsibilities do we have toward it?
* How might an understanding of the Indigenous philosophies of land as a living entity shape our actions and attitudes towards place?
* How does land remember?
* What traces do human history and culture leave on landscapes, and can these memories be erased or forgotten over time?
* What ethical questions arise when humans alter landscapes due to urbanisation, industry, or agriculture? How might these changes impact not only the environment but also our collective memory and identity?
* If climate change transforms a landscape significantly, does it lose its cultural or personal significance?
* How can people maintain a connection to a place that no longer resembles what they once knew?
* How does being displaced from a familiar land affect a person’s identity?
* Can someone find a sense of themselves in a new place, or does displacement inevitably lead to a sense of loss?
* In what ways can migration represent changes in one’s beliefs, values, or identity? Can migrating to a new place lead to a reconstruction of who we are?
* Can people feel a deep connection to places they’ve never visited, like ancestral homelands?
* How does the idea of an imagined or inherited country shape a person’s identity?
* How can we balance our respect for the land’s past (its history and the memories it holds) with our responsibility to preserve it for future generations? What actions might reflect this balance?

#### Introducing complex thinking around Framework ideas

1. **Writing about protest**

##### Explorations of conflict and contest, what it means to protest, the value of protest, the outcomes of protest, personal stories of protest, struggle and war.

##### Students could explore established figures like Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks and Vida Goldstein, marginalised figures like Pemulwuy and Claudette Colvin, and figures and movements like Greta Thunberg and the BLM protests. Events like massacres in Australia and the Frontier Wars could be explored as expressions of protest – and the attendant tragedy. There could also be explorations of the success and failure of protest – and the prescient protests that gained ground after the original protest had faded. Students could consider individual protest and group protest.

*These big ideas could be framed as a series of questions that form the basis for early writing:*

* Is protest a fundamental human right, or should it be limited under certain circumstances?
* What justifies the right to protest, and what responsibilities come with it?
* Is it ever morally acceptable for protests to involve violence or disruption if peaceful efforts have failed? At what point, if any, do the ends justify the means in protest?
* How much personal sacrifice is too much in the pursuit of justice?
* Is there a moral obligation to protest if someone’s own comfort or safety is at stake?
* Why is the act of protest often linked to human dignity? In what ways does standing up against injustice, even when unsuccessful, affirm a person’s sense of worth?
* What do the nature and frequency of protests reveal about a society’s core values and fears?
* Is a society that suppresses protest a strong or weak one? Why?
* What does it mean when certain issues prompt widespread protest while others remain largely ignored?
* How do what a society prioritises or thinks is most important influence which injustices are worthy of protest?
* How do we decide which protests are remembered in history and which are forgotten? Are those decisions influenced by who held power or who was marginalised at the time?
* Can a protest be considered successful if its impact isn’t felt until years later? What does this say about the value of protest as an act of faith in future change?
* Is choosing not to protest, when aware of injustice, a morally neutral act, or is staying silent the same as being complicit?
* In what ways might inaction be as powerful (or damaging) as vocal opposition?
* Is protest really the most effective vehicle for change or should it be abandoned in favour of politics?
* What place is there for in-person protests in an age of internet activism?

#### Introducing complex thinking around Framework ideas

1. **Writing about personal journeys**

##### Explorations of ‘life’ or biographical explorations – telling our stories, telling others’ stories, the problem of telling stories, appropriation of stories, who tells the stories and our history, missing stories, marginalised and elevated stories. Students could explore personal milestones, the effects of key events on their lives, or explore these ideas through the eyes of others.

Students who have migrated can explore their stories of movement and disruption. They can explore the expectations of change, and the language of a new place and culture.

*These big ideas could be framed as a series of questions that form the basis for early writing:*

* Is a person changed by their journeys, or do journeys reveal who they already were?
* Does experience shape identity or merely clarify it?
* Who has the right to tell a personal journey?
* If someone else’s story deeply affects us, are we entitled to share it?
* Can someone find themselves if as a species we are always changing?
* What does it mean to be authentic if the self is constantly evolving?
* Can you be said to have had a personal journey if you are not at the end of your life or at a significant point in it (i.e., becoming a parent, moving overseas etc.)
* Are memories reliable enough to serve as the basis of a true or personal journey?
* Can journeys ever be known for what they are at the time someone is on one? Do we only assign importance to an event in hindsight?
* How does status or power shape a journey? Are the journeys of some individuals seen as more important than others?
* How do we differentiate between milestones we genuinely value and those society expects us to achieve?
* Does a personal journey inevitably create distance from others, or does it deepen connections?
* Is transformation fundamentally an individual process or could it be a collective one?
* Does narrating a personal journey create a new self? Can the act of sharing or narrating a journey change the journey itself?
* How do societal expectations shape personal journeys? Are journeys pursued for genuine self-discovery, or are they sometimes influenced by external ideas of what someone should experience during their lifetime?
* Why do narratives of personal journeys often involve conflict or hardship? Is overcoming these obstacles necessary for genuine growth, or can understanding come without having to experience a struggle?

#### Introducing complex thinking around Framework ideas

1. **Writing about play**

Explorations of experiences and traditions of play and playing in many cultures and through history.

Students could explore play as it is applied to games, sport, acting and make-believe, music, language and images. They could also explore concepts of collaboration and connection, digital vs analogue, rules and rule breaking. There is scope to consider the ways play and play acting can represent the ‘real’ world, and to explore issues associated with using play or play acting to minimise or mitigate against events or actions.

* These big ideas could be framed as a series of questions that form the basis for early writing:
* Can play be taken too seriously, and if so, what are the consequences?
* What risks emerge when games or competitions are given the same weight as real-world issues, particularly in areas like sport, politics, or even education?
* How might play be liberating in some contexts but restrictive in others, such as when games demand strict adherence to rules or encourage competition?
* To what extent does the structure and design of play mirror social constructs like rule-following, hierarchy, or authority?
* Does play allow individuals to reveal their true selves, or does it encourage people to take on alternate identities and roles?
* How might adopting a character or persona during play provide insight into someone’s personality, aspirations, or hidden traits?
* How does digital play alter the nature of human interaction, connection, and imagination compared to traditional physical play?
* Is virtual play fundamentally different from face-to-face play in terms of the skills it develops or the ways it connects people?
* Is breaking the rules an essential part of meaningful play, or does it disrupt the true nature of the game?
* What does the tendency to cheat, innovate, or creatively bend the rules during play reveal about human nature?
* Does competition enhance the joy and freedom of play, or does it undermine these elements by introducing pressure and stress?
* Can competitive play coexist with the idea of play as a form of pleasure, or does it create an environment where success and failure take on too much significance?
* How does imaginative play in children contribute to their understanding of the world? Does this form of play encourage creativity, empathy, or problem-solving in unique ways that structured learning cannot?
* How does the nature of play and imagination evolve from childhood to adulthood? Is there a fundamental difference between children’s imaginative play and adults’ engagement in acting or performance, or are they extensions of the same impulse?

**Writing tasks and initial feedback**

Students could engage with these questions through a simple process of discussion, short-writes in response to the question and the answers raised in the discussion and then further research that comes as a result of the writing.

When students are comfortable with a range of ideas about their Framework idea, then exposing them to mentor texts ensures that they come as informed readers and are able to embrace, question and challenge the ideas as well as the text structures, language features and vocabulary presented to them in these extended forms of writing.

Teacher feedback on formative writing tasks such as these can take the form of:

Oral comment

Simple annotations made in class as a teacher looks at the student work in progress

Suggestions and next-steps suggestions (these can be given in oral form for students to record in their journals)