The use of historical fiction to promote a critical citizenry

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An understanding of Australian history is a core part of what it means to be an active and informed citizen. (Julie Bishop, August, 2006)

THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER, JOHN HOWARD and the Honorable Julie Bishop, former Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training and now Deputy Leader of the Opposition, argued that there is something wrong with history teaching in Australian schools. Although the details of the complaints are not totally clear, their view seems to be that history teaching has been removed as a single discipline in many states; it is being taught as part of the social sciences or cultural studies; and that too much of it is taught with an issues-focused approach. The assertion is that chronology is lost, students are not sufficiently proud of their country, and citizens with multicultural backgrounds do not identify with their own country. Apparently there is not a clear enough picture of what Australian citizenship entails in young Australians' minds. It therefore follows that a lack of understanding of history leads to a loss of identity, an inability to understand contemporary events and a lack of skills of historic literacy — which Bob Carr, another politician who is prepared to readily promote his expertise in the teaching of history, sees as Information Age skills such as collecting, organising, presenting and debating information (Bishop, 2006). These criticisms give rise to the question of whether the study of history, as a discrete discipline at school, is the way to achieve all these things that are assumed to be lacking and further questions arise inevitably, whose history and what history? These can be delicate and hotly contested issues in education especially when the study of history is linked to the assumed values of citizenship. But here historical fiction can have a role. I would argue that the use of historical fiction can be very useful in addressing the development of national identity, among other discipline and interdisciplinary-based approaches, and can be very helpful in understanding historical events as well as learning historic literacy in our schools. Moreover historical fiction can link a number of disciplines under a broader framework of Australian values and so can provide an alternative approach to citizenship building — one that doesn't saddle history with such a lot of additional baggage.
The argument for using the teaching of history to teach citizenship

What the former Prime Minister and Julie Bishop appeared to be saying in is that history should be chronological and be taught as a narrative. But what is that narrative? Julie Bishop in her media release in July, 2006 argued that such a study should include answers to questions such as, “… when and why Captain James Cook sailed along the east coast of Australia, who was our first Prime Minister, why we were involved in two world wars and how federation came about”. She argued that:

It is essential that we put a structured narrative back into the teaching of Australian history so that by the time students finish secondary schooling, they have a thorough understanding of their nation’s past, and how we have become a modern liberal democracy. Young Australians should study the past to understand the present, so that they can make informed decisions for the future. (Media release, 18 July, 2006).

Prime Minister John Howard developed a similar approach, in his Australia Day speech in 2006, urging a “root and branch renewal” with the need for a less questioning approach to history ‘to teach them the central currents of our nation’s development’. One could question, however, whether there is one ‘central current’ of national development — one correct version of the progress toward ‘our wonderful liberal democracy’. On the one hand it is obvious that history has many stories, including ones that we don’t want to be taught (see Maclntyre & Clark, 2003, The History Wars). On the other hand it would appear that it has too few — the story that the government wanted to be taught apparently isn’t being taught! The selection and rejection of historical facts to tell the citizenship story is not an easy task and is certainly not one that can be undertaken lightly.

What is active and engaged citizenship and how should it be taught?

The issue of citizenship education and the role of history in it is not new. In 1989 the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training report entitled Education for Active Citizenship, defined an active citizen but did so in a way that would find rejection by the Howard/Bishop alliance. The Senate Committee argued that an active citizen was ‘not someone who has simply accumulated a store of facts about the workings of the political system — someone who is able to perform well in a political quiz’. The report went on to point out that: ‘equally important is the motivation and the capacity to put that knowledge to good use … an active citizen, in the committee’s view, is someone who not only believes in the concept of a democratic society but who is willing and able to translate that belief into action’ (p. 7). This view of active citizenship implies an important role for a study of values, for active and engaging pedagogy, for systematic thinking and information literacy, and a need to be inclusive of difference (Kennedy, 2005). History can contribute but does it provide the whole answer?

In 1994 the Civics Expert Group also addressed the question of citizenship, but again the one grand narrative was absent. The emphasis was on the ability to participate in debate, to be well informed and to be prepared to involved:

The education we need is one that will enable Australian citizens to participate in the present debates about our future with a better awareness of the legacy of the past… It should give them the knowledge and understanding to be able to join in the process of reconciliation… It should inform them of our constitutional legacy so that they can make up their own minds about whether Australia becomes a republic… And it should assist them to act as informed, confident, tolerant citizens, secure in their rights and the responsibilities as members of a diverse and inclusive society.

(Civics Expert Group, 1994, p. 27)

If citizenship is about diversity of knowledge and involvement in controversial issues, the question then arises of the role of history as the best, or even a suitable vehicle, in education. It has a role, undoubtedly, but, as indicated by the evaluation report on the Discovering Democracy teaching materials, explicit linkages should be made to other initiatives such as the Commonwealth supported values studies, the Commonwealth History Project, studies of Asia, Australian studies and multiculturalism (if we can still use this term) and reconciliation (DEST, 2004). Young (1996) acknowledged this when she argued for more time for history to develop the depth of knowledge required to contextualise contemporary matters and understand the processes of social/political change (p. 68). The
contextualisation is a vital contribution of history but citizenship is really much more than this. It would seem that no one would argue that knowledge of Australian history is not an important aspect of citizenship but to give it the prime responsibility for citizenship education runs counter to most citizenship initiatives to date. Indeed all states have developed ways to teach citizenship that are in marked contrast to the model now advocated by the Federal Government and so one could question whether longstanding expertise in curriculum development should be totally disregarded in these current discussions.

The role of the Federal Government in developing curriculum

The stage is thus set for a debate over who should develop the school curriculum. Since Federation the states have had the responsibility for schooling and it is fascinating that the Federal Minister was driving this national school curriculum in history, but once again this is not a new debate. There is precedence of course when the Whitlam government sought intervention in schooling, supplying grants, but by and large left the curriculum to educators. Whitlam did, however bequeath a legacy, one which was picked up by the Howard Federal Government, with the notion that grants be tied to certain outcomes. We saw a blatant example of this in 2006 with the implementation of A–E report cards in all schools. Resources were to be withheld from states which did not comply. The push for national standardisation has now moved to the curriculum — and it is a push that has bipartisan support. The Labor party, after having won power in the 2007 national elections, has also included a national curriculum in its policy statements so there is no anticipation that a change of government will make very much difference. (Wheeldon, 2007). The timing for educators could not be worse. After a decade of constant change in curriculum at state level in response to outcomes and testing focused syllabuses — all developed on low budgets and with little professional development for teachers — teachers and curriculum consultants are girding their loins to start all over again.

The idea of a national curriculum is not new. Such a curriculum is seen to ensure national uniformity. It is interesting that when R. Freeman Butts of Colombia University visited Australia in 1954 he wrote of an education system that was excessively centralised, with fixed syllabuses, a hierarchy of subjects biased toward the academic and a lack of public involvement. Uniformity existed under the various state jurisdictions. He attested:

Uniform policy seems to apply to buildings, facilities, to educational expenditure, to subjects in the curriculum, to teaching methods, to standards of achievement for students, to classification, appointment, promotion and salary schedules for teachers, and the preparation of teachers. (1955, p. 12)

However this uniformity was not seen as a good thing and many curriculum initiatives were implemented to encourage more diversity in curriculum and schooling generally — diversity to cater for difference in community and individual students. After the launch of Sputnik in 1957 education became a strategic investment in the Cold War era, seen as a requirement for nation building and an important economic factor. Increasingly it was not good enough to leave it to the states or to state mediated, school-based curriculum developers. By the 1970s a Commonwealth-inspired core curriculum, a basic framework, was on the agenda and the Commonwealth Curriculum Development Centre was instituted in 1976 by the Fraser government. However, it was later dissolved because there was not enough money to establish a national curriculum, and because the goals of a national curriculum were elusive (Tripp & Watt, 1984). Nevertheless the idea lived on, if only in a residual form. Educational ministers in the Hawke Labor party, Susan Ryan and then John Dawkins also promoted the notion of a national curriculum (Piper, 1997). In 1994, during the Keating government, the National Profiles were established in eight national learning areas as a result of collaborative mapping efforts between state and territory education system and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and, in varying degrees, the states used these as guidelines (Marsh, 1994). The Adelaide Declaration (DEST, 1999) too attempted to establish some national goals for schooling. Additionally it is not the first time in Australian curriculum history that the study of history has been seen as the primary carrier of citizenship education — evidently the sole repository of skilled decision making ability. The 1994 study, Whereas the People argued that we had a civics deficit and that the way to remedy this was to
teach better (more?) history. This study provided impetus for the Curriculum Corporation to develop the Discovering Democracy teaching materials which have been quite successful, considering they are federally developed resources which have had to be adapted to differing state curriculum. In 1994 the answer from the Federal Government was better resources to help teachers teach about these themes. Now it appears to be a whole national curriculum with an emphasis on a particular discipline area. Now uniformity is once again seen as vital with the argument being that it will assist those students who change states, and that it is important to ensure international competitiveness and to demonstrate expertise in international testing regimes.

It is thus not a surprise that we are once again discussing national curriculum but the lesson from this historical overview is that it is ‘easier said than done’ and it requires close collaboration between the different groups interested in the process. But has the question of how to teach citizenship been canvassed widely enough to provide national guidance? Exactly how does the study of history as a factual study, a discipline that will help us understand the background to current events, enable citizenship. What aspects of its study support the development of national identity?

History as a factual study — how does it elicit citizenship?

The study of history is often seen as a factual study. There are, it is claimed, indisputable facts about the past, and it therefore follows that the story woven around these facts can only be seen in one way — that is taking on the perspective of the correct version of events. History is thus a narrative that cannot be questioned and there does seem to be perception by the former education minister and Prime Minister that this narrative is quite clearly one of national progress. But an associated question is whether there is also a message that goes with the narrative, one of national identity and national pride. Is there an embedded theme of what we were and so what we have become (Phillips, 1996)? Does history tell a moral tale? If so it would seem to be telling a story rather than narrating facts. It is an old debate, one that goes back to the beginning of history writing. The ancients did not differentiate between history and morality — the recording of one was an object lesson in the other. The notion that men should know their places and give the gods their due abound in the oral tradition of Homer, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides and the plays of Sophocles. Interest in contemporary events, being informed by history was the hallmark of the beginnings of historical writing. Curthoys and Docker (2006) argue that it was only in the nineteenth century that history and literature began to be seen as different forms of study and is it with Ranke’s publication in 1824 of History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations that the idea of history as a science and historians as researchers into facts with ‘scholarly impartiality and objectivity’ (Curthoys & Docker, 2006, p. 70) emerged. But if history is about the study of facts, how can be used in the schools founded by the nation states when what the state wants is a civic message to be told and a moral to be learned. The traditional study of history as evidenced by Herodotus and Thucydides fits better with the thinking in our postmodern world where multiple views of events, reflecting multiple values, are acknowledged as valid, although perhaps not definitive. The national story is only one of them.

History for citizenship values

Barton and Levstik (2004) emphasise that the teaching of history has always been influenced by values and usually has a focus that may or may not be obvious to those being taught. They point to the fact that teachers in the United States of America emphasise historical examples that expound the notion of national freedom and progress thus ignoring incidents that do not support this view. By way of contrast, in Northern Ireland, the themes selected for interrogation are those where the role of discussion in history classrooms is to promote the need for cooperation between communities. Barton and Levstik argue that the United States’ story of freedom and progress actually limits the skills needed for living in a pluralist society because historical events that do not fit this story are not studied and so children do not question current social norms and also cannot learn from others’ stories. They argue that ‘students should learn history to contribute to a participatory, pluralist democracy’ (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 259). By one reading they are arguing that civic virtue is enhanced by broadening the story. The United States is, after all, a multicultural, pluralist society. Democracy should be predicated on that. This perspective is certainly, in Morton’s view, evident in...
Canada. Morton (2000) points to the changes in emphasis in Canadian history where there have been calls for schools to teach more history but there has always been a tension between the history taught in Quebec and that taught in the other provinces (Morton, 2000, p. 59).

By another reading, however, they are opening up the story of history to be subjective. The potential study available to it is so vast that the issue becomes one of selection of the facts by a vast number of historians, educators and other interested groups. History then is a case of storytelling and can be characterised as having many points of similarity with fictional literature. Seixas (2000) argues that there are three approaches to teaching history in the classroom, all three of which involve storytelling, whether it be the teacher providing the best story, the students learning how the story came to be and so learning the tools of storytelling from an historian's perspective or, thirdly, by considering all stories and debating which ones provide the best fit for particular groups.

The questions arise: whose version of history will be taught? How do we decide which parts of history to teach and which parts to discard? Should we decide to prioritise the contemporary issues and values in our selection? These questions put the emphasis not on history as a discipline, but on the historians, history educators and other actors who influence how the discipline is taught. Essentially the questions, especially the last one, open the argument that history can be seen as a moral story, an interpretation of the past assembled for a purpose. It thus has similarities to literature, particularly children's literature, which likewise tells a story often with a moral imperative.

History and citizenship

Is history the only area of the curriculum that can assist Australians to make informed decisions? After all, history can provide valuable background understanding but civics, geography, environmental studies, politics and religious studies can likewise inform students. Brennan (1996) argued that citizenship should be a cross curricular perspective and work conceptually throughout many curriculum areas. For some examples of cross curricular approaches just look at the Commonwealth of Australia's school values web pages. There are numerous examples of schools implementing a wide range of activities that are teaching and living democratic decision making and a sense of national identity and these are schools that do not necessarily teach history as a single discipline.

One key question that should be asked before diving into a new national curriculum for history is to explore the presupposition that history = citizenship. In NSW, the only state where history is compulsory in junior secondary school, geography is also compulsory and for similar reasons — it assists citizenship understanding. In fact, geography has a very strong claim to enhancing national development and those who argue that geography is simply about place knowledge, have missed about a hundred years of curriculum development in that discipline area (Marchetto, 1966; Reynolds, 1999). However, it is not the intention of this paper to go through all these curriculum areas and point our how they all make contributions to the national citizenship curriculum. I try to do that in many other forums (Reynolds, R., Williams, C. & Brown, J., 2007; Hinde-McLeod, J. & Reynolds, R., 2007; Hinde-McLeod, J. & Reynolds, R., 2006; Reynolds, R., 2004). In this paper I want to demonstrate how strong the links are between the teaching of history and the teaching of literature and how both can be strengthened with a view to emphasising of citizenship values and national identity. Furthermore, as argued before, providing an historian's narrative alongside a storyteller's narrative helps glean the stories about historical events.

What came from the August history summit in 2006 was the recommendation that Australian history be seen as an important study in Australian schools; that Australian history should encompass multiple perspectives; that Australian history in schools be teachable, do-able and sustainable; that issues-based studies of Australian society be based on a clear chronology; that key events in Australian history be sequentially addressed, and that if a national model curriculum was developed it should be based on sound principles of historical literacy. Who can argue with that? The question is will it, in isolation, teach citizenship?

Taylor and Young (n.d.) in their guide to training history teachers argue that there is a strong link between history and civics and citizenship education and it is the historical stories that are emphasised — stories that teach about issues and values that count across time. Stories are mentioned often and they do not indicate that there is only
one story to be told. The stories have to have meaning for the students so of course the themes must vary to provide this meaning. Some of the essential content links made by Taylor and Young between history teaching and civics teaching are listed below:

- Stories behind contemporary issues and the context through which students make meaning of current events and develop perspectives on the future.
- Narratives behind Australians’ civic past so that students gain a sense of change, time, continuity, causation, motivation and heritage.
- Insight into human experiences in other times and societies which provide a basis for evaluating students’ own life experiences.
- Individual stories and models of citizenship which enable students to understand decision-making processes and the choices made by individuals when confronted with challenges.
- Development of skills and abilities and a means of understanding and valuing principles of democracy, social justice and ecological sustainability.

The use of historical fiction

The primary school has been a sector that is often overlooked in these debates. History as a stand alone discipline is not taught in primary schools in Australia, yet there are many primary schools that exemplify many of the characteristics Julie Bishop was extolling. Determining the discipline focus for a thorough understanding of citizenship is particularly difficult in primary school because the school curriculum is largely based on an integrated, interdisciplinary approach with fiction of all shapes and sizes providing the cement that glues it all together. Similar claims for both history and literature as forces for particular moral and value-laden programs assists the argument that historical fiction can have an important part to play in promoting particular societal agendas and can be part of an integrated — rather than single discipline — approach to citizenship education.

Anderson (1993) implies that one of the reasons why primary schools persist with an integrated approach to teaching citizenship in HSIE is because they lack sufficient expertise in the social science disciplines. Although most primary teachers would refute this, arguing that teaching in an integrated manner helps engage students and provides significance to their learning, it is still the case that if history is seen to be a key focus discipline for teaching citizenship then there are distinct difficulties in the way primary teachers have been prepared for teaching in this area. The National Inquiry into School History (2000) found that the teaching of school history in all schools — both primary and secondary — was very fragmented. This was due to the lack of publishing opportunities in this field, the lack of history educators at Australian universities, the fact that there is no professional association for history educators, and the inability of history lecturers to liaise with history educators because of increased workloads in universities. There was found to be a substantial lack of historical knowledge (both content and history teaching technique) among primary school teachers and they lacked confidence when teaching in the area. It was found that there was haphazard pre-service training and preparation in this area and that curriculum documents varied in their usefulness. There were also few curriculum support services for teachers in the classroom in the area.

There is thus a litany of reasons why there will be difficulties in a simple ‘history will fix all’ approach to citizenship. If history can be used not as a discipline but as part of a broader school curriculum, can it be also be used in one activity that potentially has universal appeal — reading stories?

What are the benefits of using historical fiction for teaching citizenship values?

Historical fiction distances

Stephens pointed out that even if the writer is not aware of it:

- children’s fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socialising their target audience …a narrative without an ideology is unthinkable: ideology is formulated in and by language, meanings within language are socially determined, and narratives are constructed out of language. (Stephens, 1992b, p. 8)

Fiction, and in particular historical fiction, is an important vessel for conveying the knowledge of others, and attitudes towards otherness that is crucial for some basic understanding of community connections. Historical fiction’s ability to display
solutions and accommodations to conflicting situations in the past — allowing for safe distancing for children to explore similar situations in their own lives — that is its great contribution to citizenship understanding. Stradling, Noctor and Baines (1984) argued that teachers may need to distance issues when dealing with sensitive matters that may generate strong feelings or polarise students. Teachers can consider analogies and parallels to current controversial situations either by removing themselves in time or in place. They suggest, for example, that exploring Indigenous conflicts in another culture can provide analogies to Indigenous issues in our own culture while exploring the issues in the past informs current debate and provides new perspectives on current issues. The distancing allows for principles to be explored without including the emotional aspects that current issues often incite. It is historical fiction’s ability to provide distancing that probably explains its power to inform in terms of current citizenship issues.

**Historical fiction deals with some difficult citizenship issues**

Fiction, including historical fiction, can provide knowledge of universal cultural issues and allow consideration of others’ views. Fiction is accessible to many children and increasingly children’s fiction provides examples of examining social themes and views on citizenship issues. Traditionally young children’s tales were moral ones. Today the overt moral dimension has been downplayed but children’s books are significant learning experiences in the moral as well as other domains of human experience. The role of historical fiction, as a segment of children’s literature, in exploring social issues such as race issues is substantial. Book reviews of fiction between 1992 and 2001 were analysed and it was found that historical fiction contained the largest percentage of multicultural protagonists of all the genres explored with 28% of all books containing multicultural protagonists being historical fiction (Agosto, D.E., Hughes-Hassell, S. & Gilmore-Clough, C., 2003). Thus, although it would be wonderful for all genres of fiction to explore current multicultural issues, it is telling that many authors feel that historical fiction provides a valuable and possibly safer avenue for exploring cross cultural issues. However is this the national story that our politicians want to told? Does the path to liberal democracy have anything to do with cross cultural understanding? That is probably the key question. Where do all our various groups of Australians fit into this national story of democratic progress?

Pearce (1997) argued that much children’s literature is dependent on the idea that children can be moulded into adults and develop the desired ideological orientation — being imbued with the values of their time. She explored the Australian fictional text *Seven Little Australians* arguing that Ethel Turner was filled with nationalist fervour and wrote about it in this classic text, but that the gender stereotyping of the period in which she wrote was also obvious — ‘girls are at best still confined to the verandahs’ (Pearce, 1997). Thus Ethel Turner was writing about a period of growing national awareness in Australian history — and the text provides interesting insight into attitudes to Federation and a national government in 1901. At the same time Turner provided a perspective on women’s rights in that period — a perspective that she was not consciously portraying but a perspective that assists students to understand something of the background to the need to fight for women’s right to vote that occurred after Federation.

For an excellent example of how citizenship issues of the present can be brought to the fore by examining historical fiction, look at the historians’ discussion and the literary and historical texts used when examining *The Rabbit Proof Fence* on the National Centre for History website. The authors explore different perspectives on the Stolen Generation and the specific incidents depicted in this text. They provide an historical context to the movie and book and apply historical skills of attributing causation and motivation to the period. The values of that historical period and the values of today are contrasted.

Another example of the way in which the two disciplines can work together to solve mutual problems is demonstrated by the EACH Project in the United Kingdom. The EACH program is a collaborative project using historic fiction to help teach both history and English. History and English teachers worked together identifying a significant historical fictional text that was located in the same period as was being studied in history. Students compared material in the fictional text to source material elicited in their history studies. They
examined supporting texts, both fictional and non-fictional, in a variety of genres. They asked questions of the author, questions of the genre as well as of the history. They researched the period of study and then they wrote their own historical fiction. Results indicated that the quality of their historical thinking had advanced as was their understanding of the genre of historical fiction. Teachers found their medieval worldview was ‘deeper and more rounded’ (Hicks & Martin, 1997, p. 55) than their counterparts who did not read the historic fiction. Of interest was that the students were fascinated in issues such as class difference and the students’ interest in ways to close social gaps was reflected in their stories.

What makes good historical fiction?

If historical fiction can provide insights into the various stories of the period what makes it different to fiction in general? VandeKieft (n.d.) argued that there are clear differences between a work of fiction and a work of historical fiction. A writer of historical fiction must have an allegiance to history but must also add the dimension of details about what happened and what it felt like. An historical novel seeks not only authentic facts but also, as far as possible, faithfully recreates minds and motives (Trease, 1995). Stephens establishes some quite rigorous constraints on those who would venture into writing historical fiction:

1. The existents of the narrative must be historically authentic, and represented authoritatively.
2. Characters must be credible and invite reader-identification — that is, in assuming that the discourse will be constructed as principally focalised by a major character, itself presented through high mimetic realisation, the criterion incorporates an arbitrary slippage between representational mode and reading strategy.
3. Readers should feel they have learned more about a time and a place through the illusion that they have experienced them vicariously (a view which presumes that reader subjectivity is properly subordinated to a subject position inscribed within the text).
4. The text should show that humans behave and feel in ways that remain constant in different periods. (Stephens, 1992, p. 204)

There are, however, difficulties in writing to fulfil each and all these criteria. For example the questions arise whether all characters from the past can be readily identifiable to the reader, and is there a slippage between values held in the past and those of the present (as represented by the example from Ethel Turner earlier)? In case of the first and fourth criteria it is not always possible to portray attitudes that are no longer acceptable, such as racism. And the reverse applies. Butts’ study of the history of the historical novel demonstrates the influence that contemporary concerns have on the depictions of the events in the historical novel. He writes, for example, that George Henty (1832–1902) depicts the adventures of young males who have lots of adventures all over the world and over a series of centuries:

but whatever historical period he wrote about, whatever the sources of the hero’s adventures, they undergo a process of Anglicisation, and the hero, whether his is an Egyptian prince or a medieval squire, thinks and behaves like a middle-class English boy... endorsement of white (British) racial superiority, of social class and of gender stereotyping... they reveal what late Victorian males made of the past and how they wished to interpret it. (Butts, 2001, p. 7).

There are constraints on the writer of historic fiction but from an educational point of view these are issues for discussion and for consideration. Most readers of historical fiction tend to fall into one of two categories — fascinated by differences between past times and their own times, or the similarities. Either way there is ample scope for examining values and considering cross cultural similarities and differences across time. The similarities between writers of history and writers of historical fiction once again emerge. Amateur historians, historical movie makers and writers of historic fiction are at risk of portraying presentism which can in turn lead to; ‘folk of past times [being] viewed in comparison with our own as better, or more commonly, worse than ourselves: benighted, corrupt, evil, or just plain stupid’ (Lowenthal, 2000, p. 66). Teaching students skills of empathy, either through a disciplined study of a historical period or through reading historical fiction, is an important information skill of the type Bob Carr talked about at the history summit. Can it be only taught through one discipline?
Conclusion — linking a range of curriculum initiatives together with historical fiction

School curriculum in Australia is an often contested area and the competing roles of the state and Commonwealth governments in developing the curriculum can lead to a lot of really good initiatives being left out of the debate. At the Commonwealth level discussion and initiatives are being implemented in a number of areas including values education, citizenship and civics education and now history education while literacy and quality teaching also continue to attract a lot of attention. In the same way as a quality teacher tries to incorporate many aspects together in order to make student learning more relevant, and connected and so significant to the learners (Hinde McLeod & Reynolds, 2006) it would seem that initiatives that can bring a number of these areas together would better enhance all areas, i.e. the sum of the whole would be greater than its separate parts. As part of the debate on the value of history education, historical fiction should be investigated and resourced as a way to build bridges between all these initiatives. It provides a holistic approach to developing literacy skills, historical skills, citizenship perspectives and an approach to values exploration and moral learning. It is, crucially, ideally suited for primary schools. Equally important it provides distance and is therefore a corrective to emphases on the lesson of history, by providing a diverse approach. Good Australian writers should be encouraged to write fiction based on key Australian themes in global contexts, and teachers be assisted to incorporate historical skills and knowledge, values investigations and citizenship viewpoints when examining them. Developing a national history curriculum in isolation from all these other Commonwealth and state initiatives would seem to be folly and against principles of quality curriculum and teaching principles.

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