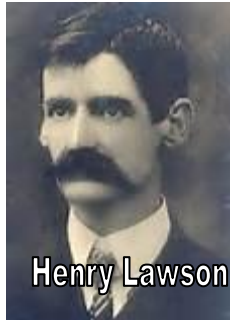# CLASSIC AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE: *Australian Identity Unit*

Featuring the ballads of Banjo Paterson & Henry Lawson

Suitable for Grades 8,9 & 10

Contains: Text, Themes, Poetry Analysis questions, Activities, Teacher's Guide, Assessment Topics and Australian Curriculum Outline

In this lesson series students will focus on Australian poetry in particular the ballad form found in the poems of Lawson and Paterson. Students will understand the characteristics of the ballad and the vocabulary and language of early poetry and gain insight into the cultural and social context of the time.

TEACHER'S SUMMARY

Henry Lawson is described as the 'people's poet' or 'bush bard'. Born in 1867 he is Australia's best known poet and fiction writer. His work contains themes of sadness and hardship inspired as they were by his own upbringing in poverty and bouts of alcoholism. He wrote copious ballads, lyrics, radical songs, sketches and stories which appeared in journals and published in collection form in Australia and England. Some well known ballads include *Freedom on the Wallaby* ,*A Song of the Republic, the Drover's Wife* and *The Old Bark school*

Andrew Barton Paterson was born in 1864 in NSW. The first publication of his poetry came in 1889 when *the Sydney Bulletin* placed *Clancy of the Overflow* by 'The Banjo' in its edition. It was followed in 1895 by Banjo's *the Man from Snowy River*. His bush ballads were typical of the bush life and his writing has a special connection to the times in which it was written. The *Bulletin* in 1880 was encouraging Australians everywhere to write about life in the outback and the 'new' country was searching for an identity. Banjo's *Waltzing Matilda* had become a more popular 'anthem' for Australians in the way it captures a heroic pioneer adventurer as its main character and idolises the spirit of 'the bush'. Banjo's poetry chronicles the common life in the outback with comedy and sardonic acceptance of the good with the bad.

The National Library of Australia TROVE is an archival collection that contains many resources that will aid the students in their research of the social context of these ballads. They have images, documents and newspaper articles of both Paterson and Lawson as well as indigenous issues and photographs.

POETRY ANALYSIS

The acronym SMILES is a useful means of covering all aspects of poetry analysis for the high schooler

S **structure** how is the poem organised? How many stanzas or verses are there? What is the rhyming scheme? Ie ABAB (each rhyming set is named by a consecutive letter) How do the ideas progress? What is the line length in syllables? Is there repetition of words and or phrases?

M **meaning** look at the title – what does it suggest the poem means? Is there an overall theme? What is the main subject? Does it have a message?

I **imagery** what visual picture do you think of when reading it? Describe the imagery used eg: metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism

L **language** what words are used – are they simple or complex? Serious or ironic? Is it lyrical and flowing? Colloquial/slang or proper English? Are there any interesting grammatical features or punctuation?

E **effect** what opinion is presented by the author/narrator? Is there a particular tone used? What do you feel when you read it, what is your response?

S **sound** what sounds are evident – onomatopoeia, alliteration, consonance or assonance

The old bark school

by Henry Lawson (1867-1922)

It was built of bark and poles, and the floor was full of holes
Where each leak in rainy weather made a pool;
And the walls were mostly cracks lined with calico and sacks —
There was little need for windows in the school.

Then we rode to school and back by the rugged gully-track,
On the old grey horse that carried three or four;
And he looked so very wise that he lit the master's eyes
Every time he put his head in at the door.

He had run with Cobb and Co. — "that grey leader, let him go!"
There were men "as knowed the brand upon his hide",
And "as knowed it on the course". Funeral service: "Good old horse!"
When we burnt him in the gully where he died.

And the master thought the same. 'Twas from Ireland that he came,
Where the tanks are full all summer, and the feed is simply grand;
And the joker then in vogue said his lessons wid a brogue —
'Twas unconscious imitation, let the reader understand.

And we learnt the world in scraps from some ancient dingy maps
Long discarded by the public-schools in town;
And as nearly every book dated back to Captain Cook
Our geography was somewhat upside-down.

It was "in the book" and so — well, at that we'd let it go,
For we never would believe that print could lie;
And we all learnt pretty soon that when we came out at noon
"The sun is in the south part of the sky."

And Ireland! that was known from the coast-line to Athlone:
We got little information re the land that gave us birth;
Save that Captain Cook was killed (and was very likely grilled)
And "the natives of New Holland are the lowest race on earth".

And a woodcut, in its place, of the same degraded race
Seemed a lot more like a camel than the blackfellows that we knew;
Jimmy Bullock, with the rest, scratched his head and gave it best;
But his faith was sadly shaken by a bobtailed kangaroo.

But the old bark school is gone, and the spot it stood upon
Is a cattle-camp in winter where the curlew's cry is heard;
There's a brick school on the flat, but a schoolmate teaches that,
For, about the time they built it, our old master was "transferred".

But the bark school comes again with exchanges 'cross the plain —
With the Out-Back Advertiser; and my fancy roams at large
When I read of passing stock, of a western mob or flock,
With "James Bullock", "Grey", or "Henry Dale" in charge.

And I think how Jimmy went from the old bark school content,
With his "eddication" finished, with his pack-horse after him;
And perhaps if I were back I would take the self-same track,
For I wish my learning ended when the Master "finished" Jim.

THEMES;

schooling & education – what 'eddication' is the narrator referring to in the last stanza?
What is the underlying assumption of bush schooling presented here?

 treatment of 'blackfellas' – do you think the narrator is racist in using this term? Can you detect any empathy with the plight of indigenous workers in the poem ? What is your response to the phrase 'the natives of New Holland are the lowest race on earth'?
Research indigenous drovers, trackers, farmhands etc in the early colonial period.[National Library of Australia has TROVE archived photographs and documents of this period online]

TEACHERS NOTES

Structure

The *Old Bark School* is ABCB with consecutive stanzas progressing in the alphabet in the format DEFE GHIH etc. It has eleven verses and progresses from depicting the bark school hut to the horse which transported the kids to school in the first three stanzas. Then follows the details of schooling including the master, including his attitude to 'blackfellas' the last three verses return to the bark school and the horses with a summary stanza that sums up the narrator's view of 'eddication'

Meaning

The narrator tells the story of Jim Bullock's 'eddication' through the eyes of another school mate. The message appears to contrast the intentioned aims of formal schooling with the life skills and education a man receives on the land.

Imagery

The visual picture the reader gets is from simple adjectives such as 'rugged gully-track', 'ancien dingy maps' and phrases which matter of factly state the rough conditions ' the floor was full of holes' 'walls were mostly cracks' 'carried three or four'

Language

The language used is conversational and informal with dialogue interspersed without.

Effect

The reader is left with a sense of nostalgia for a simple school and home life that revolves around family and the bush.

ACTIVITIES

1. Construct a timeline of the colonial period that includes Lawson and Cobb & co along with major events in history that relate to everyday life and hardships [see NLA TROVE reference]
2. Compare the language of both poems in a venn diagram

the old bark school   *a bush christening*
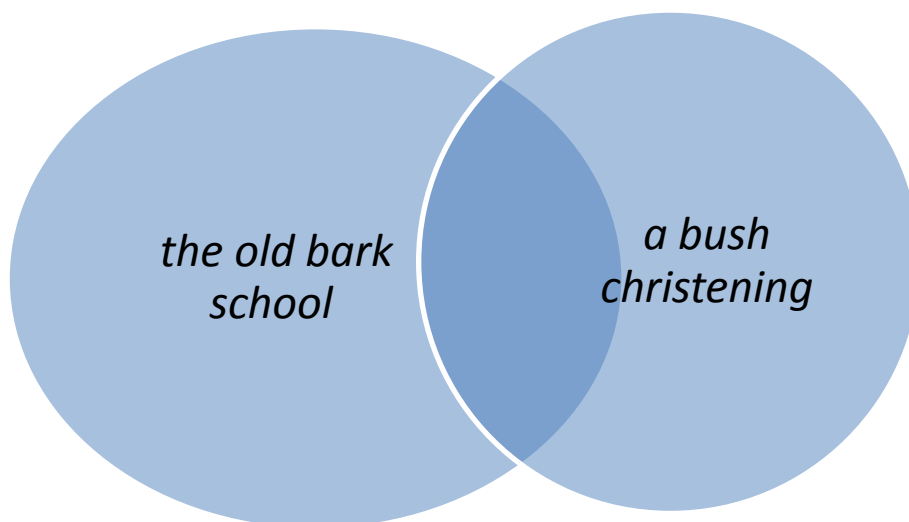
3. Write a ballad about your modern school setting using the ballad rubric
4. Investigate other poems and short stories by Lawson and write a journalistic report on his life and famous works

USE this template for a journalistic report

Paterson **who**	poetry **what**	Australia late 1800 **where/when**	social context **why**

5. Using visual media create the old bark school as described in the poem[photoshop, digital photography]

6. Write an imaginative short story based on the character of the schoolmaster

7. Illustrate the plot progression via sketching a storyboard, animated comic software or making a 2-3 min film [iMovie or photoshop]

8. Write an essay that examines the main themes present in Lawson's poetry.

9.Using literary devices common to either ballad write a short story and evaluate aesthetic features in each which reinforce the theme

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VOCABULARY pop quiz

Cobb & co *horse and wagon mail delivery*

Tanks are full *water never runs out*

Wid *with* **Brogue** *accent*

Out back advertiser *gossip*

'grey leader' *head horse*

outer Barcoo *region in central west QLD*

shanty *hut* **divil** *devil*

collogue *conversation, debate*

aisy *gently* **wid** *with*

eddication *education,, schooling*

none of your dolts *not stupid*

man of the frock *reverend*

'Knowed it on the course' *recognised the famous horse from the postal run*

A BUSH CHRISTENING

by Banjo Paterson (1864 - 1941) * available as a picture book

On the outer Barcoo where the churches are few,
        And men of religion are scanty,
On a road never cross'd 'cept by folk that are lost,
        One Michael Magee had a shanty.

Now this Mike was the dad of a ten-year-old lad,
        Plump, healthy, and stoutly conditioned;
He was strong as the best, but poor Mike had no rest
        For the youngster had never been christened,

And his wife used to cry, "If the darlin' should die
        Saint Peter would not recognise him."
But by luck he survived till a preacher arrived,
        Who agreed straightaway to baptise him.

Now the artful young rogue, while they held their collogue,
        With his ear to the keyhole was listenin',
And he muttered in fright while his features turned white,
        "What the divil and all is this christenin'?"

He was none of your dolts, he had seen them brand colts,
        And it seemed to his small understanding,
If the man in the frock made him one of the flock,
        It must mean something very like branding.

So away with a rush he set off for the bush,
        While the tears in his eyelids they glistened-
"'Tis outrageous," says he, "to brand youngsters like me,
        I'll be dashed if I'll stop to be christened!"

Like a young native dog he ran into a log,
        And his father with language uncivil,
Never heeding the "praste" cried aloud in his haste,
        "Come out and be christened, you divil!"

But he lay there as snug as a bug in a rug,
        And his parents in vain might reprove him,
Till his reverence spoke (he was fond of a joke)

"I've a notion," says he, "that'll move him."

"Poke a stick up the log, give the spalpeen a prog;
        Poke him aisy-don't hurt him or maim him,
'Tis not long that he'll stand, I've the water at hand,
        As he rushes out this end I'll name him.

"Here he comes, and for shame! ye've forgotten the name-
        Is it Patsy or Michael or Dinnis?"
Here the youngster ran out, and the priest gave a shout-
        "Take your chance, anyhow, wid 'Maginnis'!"

As the howling young cub ran away to the scrub
        Where he knew that pursuit would be risky,
The priest, as he fled, flung a flask at his head
        That was labelled "Maginnis's Whisky!"

And Maginnis Magee has been made a J.P.,
        And the one thing he hates more than sin is
To be asked by the folk who have heard of the joke,
        How he came to be christened "Maginnis"!
The Bulletin, 16 December 1893.

TEACHERS NOTES

Structure

' A bush christening' is structured using ABCB rhyme scheme wherein the second and last line of each stanza rhymes. The accent is 4, 3 4 3 indicated above the words by͡   in twelve verses. The plot line. The first verse begins with the setting followed by two verses describing the wife's concern over their son. The reverend arrives and the son overhears the plan to be christened – his thinking and words provide a humorous verse four five and six. The action occurs next as the boy hides in a log and the family and reverend try to capture him. The highlight when he is caught and baptised by a flask of whisky occurs in ten and eleven. The summary concludes with the impact this event had on an adult maginnis.

Meaning

The poem is a straightforward story about bush hardships and isolation featuring a boy who is christened in amusing circumstances. The main subject is the lad 'maginnis' and the family members along with the reverend who conspire to 'brand' him as a Christian.

Imagery

 The visual picture is an outback bush setting early 1800s in Australia. The rough conditions are presented through similes such as 'like a young native dog' and metaphor 'howling cub'. Simple

symbolism such as maginnis whisky to represent the iconic drunk priest and branding of colts to highlight the rite of passage that is ceremony in church tradition creates more visual features

Language

The tone is satirical the language is colloquial early Australian English such as 'wid' 'brogue' 'collogue' . Phrases are used to highlight the eccentricities of the situation with the satirical 'On aˆroad never ˆcross'd 'cept byˆfolk that are ˆ lost' (isolated) and 'And his wife used to cry, "If the darlin' should die Saint Peter would not recognise him."(religion). The plot twists contain events which progress quickly to a pivotal moment in the log wherein the lad is poked and escapes to be hit by a flask. The dialogue between the parents and reverend ' give the spalpeen a prog' is entertaining satire directed at the function of church in the outback. The ineptitude of the reverend as he forgets the name of the lad creates an amusing anecdote that nevertheless stays with 'maginnis' all his life. The reader is left with a taste of outback life in colonial times in which hardship, stupidity and difficulties are presented with humor.
Sound effects are not evident in this poem

THEMES:

Outback padres – bush religion, isolation

Traditions –christening & naming ceremonies

Farm life – branding horses

ACTIVITIES

1.Print out poem and highlight aesthetic features according to key

 Simile   metaphor   alliteration   personification   onomatopoeia

2.Using *the rubric* create a modern ballad about family traditions. Use media resources from the table to investigate modern examples of storytelling. Present your ballad in front of an audience

3. Create a poster of Australian icons using pictures cut out OR powerpoint/prezi presentation using images **hint** focus on either indigenous or colonisation Or divide into two to contrast both viewpoints

4. investigate one icon from Australian culture eg: bushrangers, drover, goldminer, convict and compile a research report on how they are depicted. Use guidelines for journalistic report such as *who what when where why how?*

6.Do a pop quiz on the unique colloquial vocabulary used in each poem. Get students to guess based on context or root word what specific words and phrases might mean. Then research or compare with answers given in teachers guide.

7. Write a one sentence summary or slogan which tells concisely what each poem is about.
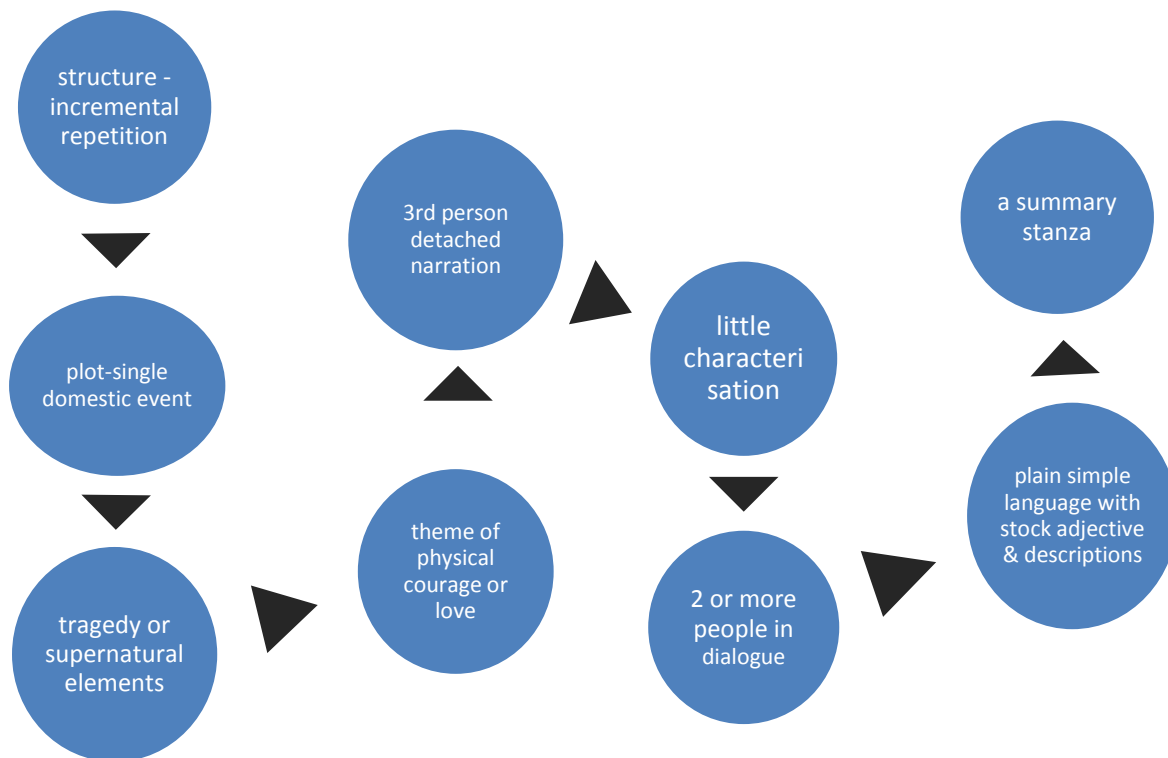
8. Find another poem from either poet and use analysis process to write a summary about it.

9. Visit a bush poet performance

Learning experiences	Texts/media resources	Focus	Specific Assessment
Historical social/cultural context of poetry	Banjo Paterson ' the man from snowy river' 'a bush christening' Henry Lawson 'the old bark school' 'Wild colonial boy' http://treasure-explorer.nla.gov.au/learningactivity/secondary-school-18	Australian cultural identity, bush icons, , colonisation, bushrangers Historical context from 1788 to today	Analytical exposition – students write or illustrate with venn diagram the contrasting representations of Australian identity in two poems – test
Explore ideas and events issues and characters represented in a range of historical and contemporary Australian poetry	Modern ballads Dorothy MacKellary 'My country' John Williamson 'mallee boy' Indigenous 'Ballad of the totems' http://youtu.be/ddINJgaYsaQ Graeme Connors 'great Australian dream'	Characterisation Historical events in poetry – drought, plague, hardship Contemporary representation of ballad	Choose one character represented in poetry and analyse the poetic devices used to present them- literary analysis 600w
Characteristics of poetry Specific language and vocabulary of ballads	Checklist for Ballads	Poetic terms and devices Ballad structure	
Create a ballad			Oral presentation of Ballad- rubric

BALLAD RUBRIC

Features of a ballad

- structure - incremental repetition
- plot-single domestic event
- tragedy or supernatural elements
- 3rd person detached narration
- theme of physical courage or love
- little characterisation
- 2 or more people in dialogue
- a summary stanza
- plain simple language with stock adjective & descriptions

ASSESSMENT TASKS

Analytical exposition 800w – students examine contrasting representations of Australian identity in two poems – test (Provide 2 hours for this test and resource such as two selected poems and diagram. Use poems which have contrasting ideologies such as indigenous vs colonial, ironic vs serious, bushdrover vs cityfolk. It might help to use a venn diagram to assist in visual separation of contrasting elements. Check for the progression of ideas and structure of the essay ie introduction, middle argument and conclusion with a main sentence in each that sums up the content. Separate each idea or discussion topic one per paragraph)

Choose one character represented in the poetry of Lawson or Paterson and analyse the poetic devices used to present them- literary analysis 600w (use the SMILES analysis framework to argue the different ways the poet presented the iconic image.)

Oral presentation of Ballad- (check against the ballad rubric for correct structure and features of a ballad)

Year 9 Achievement Standard

Receptive modes (listening, reading and viewing)

By the end of Year 9, students analyse the ways that text structures can be manipulated for effect. They analyse and explain how images, vocabulary choices and language features distinguish the work of individual authors.

They evaluate and integrate ideas and information from texts to form their own interpretations. They select evidence from the text to analyse and explain how language choices and conventions are used to influence an audience. They listen for ways texts position an audience.

Productive modes (speaking, writing and creating)

Students understand how to use a variety of language features to create different levels of meaning. They understand how interpretations can vary by comparing their responses to texts to the responses of others. In creating texts, students demonstrate how manipulating language features and images can create innovative texts.

Students create texts that respond to issues, interpreting and integrating ideas from other texts. They make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, comparing and evaluating responses to ideas and issues. They edit for effect, selecting vocabulary and grammar that contribute to the precision and persuasiveness of texts and using accurate spelling and punctuation.

English

| Rationale/Aims | Organisation | Foundation to Year 10 Curriculum | | Speaking | Language |

Filters: Showing selected year levels ▼ | Showing selected strands ▼ | General capabilities ▼ | Cross–curriculum priorities ▼ | **Apply filters** | **Clear filters**

View: ⊞ ▤ ⧉ **E**   Show: ☐ Level descriptions ☑ Content descriptions ☑ Achievement standards ☐ Icons   **Print this page**

Year 9

Year 9 Content Descriptions

Literature

Literature and context	Elaborations
Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1633)	• exploring and reflecting on representations of values (for example love, freedom, integrity) in literature drawn from cultures and times different from the students' own • exploring and reflecting on personal understanding of the world and human experience, interpreted in literature drawn from cultures and times different from the students' own • reviewing historical fiction or nonfiction written by and about the peoples of Asia • analysing literary texts created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including documentaries, picture books, print texts and other multimodal texts) and also texts including film produced by and about peoples of Asian background, and considering the different ways these texts represent people, places, things and issues

Responding to literature	Elaborations
Present an argument about a literary text based on initial impressions and subsequent analysis of the whole text (ACELT1771)	• interrogating and making judgments about a text, comparing others' ideas against the student's own and reaching an independent decision or shared consensus about the interpretations and ideas expressed
Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)	• establishing a wide reading list on a particular issue based on personal preference and establishing reasons for the inclusion of these texts

Examining literature	Elaborations
Analyse texts from familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and discuss and evaluate their content and the appeal of an individual author's literary style (ACELT1636)	• comparing texts created by the same author to determine literary style, assessing its appeal and presenting this comparison to others • examining how different authors make use of devices like myth, icons and imagery and evaluating the effect of these choices on audiences
Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)	• identifying examples of language devices in a range of poems, ballads or poetic extracts, and considering how their use adds to meaning and may also influence the emotional responses of listeners or readers, in varying ways • exploring how language devices look or sound in written or spoken texts, how they can be identified, purposes they serve and what effect they might have on how the audience responds • taking a particular area of study, a topic or theme and examining how different authors make use of devices like myth, icons and imagery in their work
Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts (ACELT1772)	• evaluating the effect on readers of text structures and language features of a literary text and comparing these with other texts • by comparing texts, writing or speaking about how well the author constructed the opening and closing sections of the text and used 'hooks' to keep the reader/viewer/listener engaged and reading on/watching/listening to the end

ACARA NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Creating literature

Create literary texts, including hybrid texts, that innovate on aspects of other texts, for example by using parody, allusion and appropriation (ACELT1773)

Experiment with the ways that language features, image and sound can be adapted in literary texts, for example the effects of stereotypical characters and settings, the playfulness of humour and pun and the use of hyperlink (ACELT1638)

- making language choices and choosing particular language devices to achieve intended effects, for example building in a surprise or twist in the ending of a short story or final scene of a film
- taking an existing short story, poem, play or speech in print form and creating a short visual text which is accompanied by a sound track containing music and sound effects, and which is intended to amuse audiences who are familiar with the original text
- creating written interpretations of traditional and contemporary literature which employs devices like metaphor, symbol, allegory and myth, and evaluating the contribution of these devices to the interpretation of the text
- creating written interpretations of traditional and contemporary poetry (for example sonnets and contemporary song lyrics) focusing on their use of symbol, myth, icons and imagery

HTTP://WWW.AUSTRALIANCURRICULUM.EDU.AU/ENGLISH/CURRICULUM/F-10?Y=9&Y=10&S=LT&C=1&C=2&C=3&C=4&C=5&C=6&C=7&LAYOUT=3