

Teachers' Notes
by Ananda Braxton-Smith

Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean
edited by
Kirsty Murray, Anita Roy & Payal Dhar

ISBN 9781743319789
Recommended for ages 15-17 yrs

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Introduction 2

 Stories and themes 2

 Note on eco-feminism 3

The General Capabilities 4

The Curriculum: details & activities 4

 Literature 1: Speculative fiction 4

 Literature 2: Text & context 7

 Literature 3: Graphic texts 8

 Literacy: Words and pictures 9

 Intercultural understanding 12

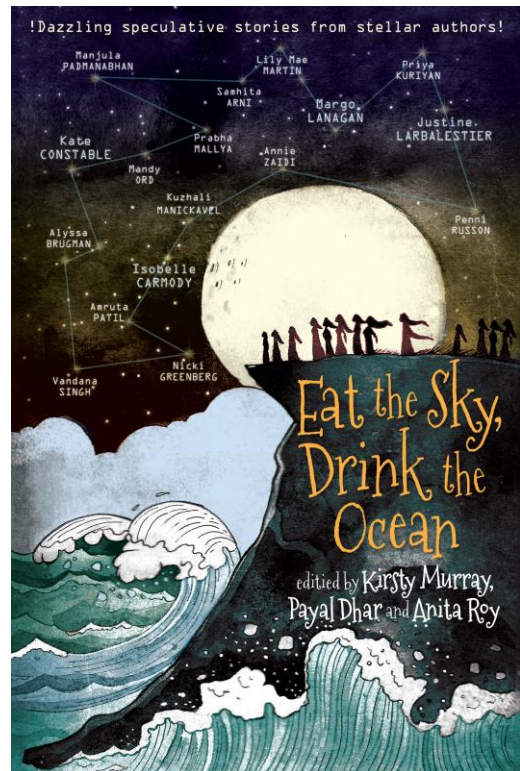
 Extension: Trouble with feminism?.. 13

Further study and resources 14

About the writers 16

Appendix 1: Summary of stories 17

Appendix 2: Discussion starters 20



INTRODUCTION

Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean is a cross-cultural anthology of seventeen short speculative fictions with a focus on the experience of girls and women. The text is the result of collaboration between women authors and artists from Australia and India. Six are graphic stories, rendered in black-and-white imagery with a taut text.

The editors (Kirsty Murray, Payal Dhar and Anita Roy) conceived the project after waves of sex-based violence washed through India and Australia in 2012. The most shocking was an attack upon a 23-year-old Indian medical student as she travelled home by bus in Delhi. The student was gang-raped for over an hour and died two weeks after the attack. The event set off riots within India and expatriate protests elsewhere.

In Melbourne only two months earlier, a young radio journalist was raped and murdered within metres of the safety of her home. In the wake of this crime, thousands of Australian women and men took to the streets and held a vigil in her memory.

These two crimes drew the editors' attention to the universality of violence and made them question what the future held for all young women and young men.

Stories and themes

[A summary and brief description of each story can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of these notes.]

In *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* each of the collaborations investigates some aspect of the experience of being born male or female. The story which connects most directly with the rape-murders mentioned above is 'Catcalls' (Margo Lanagan), in which a sexually threatened girl is buoyed and dignified by the support of members of her community.

Most of the stories in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* occur in a defamiliarised present or near-future, in environments altered through climate change or resource wars. However women still suffer particular types of coercion and violence while simultaneously meeting the same challenges as men to survive.

Female experience is central to the anthology but there are stories that investigate the effects of sex bias in the lives of boys and men. In the story 'Cool' (Manjula Padmanabhan), a young man lives and works in space collecting Spit, the clean fuel that future-Earth requires. This youth has little contact with other human beings. As a result he has fallen in love with a virtual human female called Miss Leila, who keeps him working by flattery and the manipulation of his desire to be 'heroic'.

In two stories there has been a shift to matriarchal control with the sex bias turned upside down. In the graphic story 'The Runners' (Isobelle Carmody and Prabha Mallya), a girl tries to save her part-brother from a life of sex-based discrimination after all 'true' men have been killed in a set of historic Motherwars. In this dystopia, biological males have been replaced by newer, 'better' men, stripped of their 'genetic' predisposition to violence.

Two stories deal directly with female body image under patriarchal ideologies. Alyssa Brugman's story 'Weft' sees a young woman selling a kidney to finance the cosmetic surgery that will see her remain physically acceptable into her forties—after which she plans to sell a cornea to finance the surgery that will maintain her looks through to her death. Kirsty Murray's 'Mirror Perfect' explores a young woman's schizophrenic and complicated relationship with her image in the mirror.

The graphic story 'Swallow the Moon' (Kate Constable and Priya Kuriyan) focuses on traditional emblems of femininity. It follows a group of young women as they are initiated into adulthood through intimate contact with the sea and the full moon. Seemingly set in an 'ancient' past amongst a 'tribal' people, 'Swallow the Moon' actually portrays a de-evolved post-apocalyptic future. A disaster has caused social regression in this society, although there is no overt textual judgement as to the benefit or otherwise of this effect. The story is an open text.

Most of the stories in this anthology are open texts. There is plenty of material for personal interpretation within single stories. Taken overall, although individual stories do have strong self-contained points to make, the anthology provides a diverse resource of girls' and women's voices.

Traditional literary signifiers or emblems feature throughout. In the graphic story 'Anarkali' (Annie Zaidi and Mandy Ord), that almost universal feminine emblem, the Earth, is represented as in sympathy with women. This retelling of this romantic Indian folk tale has a dancer entombed alive as punishment for her sexual relationship with the prince. In the original tale the dancer dies but in this re-version she manages to escape and go on to rescue the prince.

Eat the Sky Drink the Ocean consciously manipulates gender assumptions as a matter of course.

Within the speculative world, as in the real world, men or boys who display emblematic 'female' behaviour are socially degraded. The story 'Memory Lace' (Payal Dhar) creates an assumption that the central figure being sold into servitude is female. He is not. The story's layering of *feminine signifiers* works with readers' assumptions about sex and gender to make its point.

Finally, the 'Notes on the Collaborations' (p.205) are well worth classroom study. They deal with the processes involved in creating the stories in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* and also with the shared feminist perspectives that inspired the stories.

Note on Eco-feminism

Conflations of femininity and the environment in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean*

Conflation:

Definition: to bring together two separate entities to form a single entity

a: to [fuse](#)

b: to [confuse](#)

Origin: Latin *conflatus*, past participle of *conflare* to blow together, fuse, from *com-* + *flare*. First known use 1610

[<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conflate>]

The stories in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* provide opportunities to interrogate the many different literary and political uses of the emblems and symbols of the feminine. It is a political act to conflate a class of people with a non-human entity. (For example, the moon, the sea, flowers and cats are often associated with women – but with very different intentions and effects.)

In patriarchies the emblems of femininity tend to reaffirm women's lesser status and reinforce notions of limited female capacity.

Reclaiming and writing back against patriarchal definitions of femininity is a political act. Since the 1970s, part of 'second wave' feminism involved a new analysis of the traditional feminine emblems. The Earth itself became a symbol of what was happening to women under patriarchy. Not only did patriarchy conflate women with the Earth—unintellectual, instinctive and 'dark'; the Earth was also conflated with women—'needing' men to control its fecundity and destructive tendencies. As the environmental movement flourished into the 1980s, a branch of feminist philosophy began to link the fate of the Earth to the fate of women. This branch of feminism is known as *eco-feminism*. *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* includes stories that echo this way of thinking.

In these stories, the soil, the sea, the moon, salt, blood, eggs, children and food are literary emblems for femaleness.

Nature and femaleness have been conflated in the human imagination for millennia. This has always been reflected in later religions that grew out of our dualistic thinking. *If women are the Earth, goes this mode of thinking, Then men must be the Sky*. The ancient worldview included gods of both sexes under a dominant Mother-God associated with Earth. When that view faded, the new Father-Gods took up their thrones in the sky. The first texts of these new male-sky-god

religions came equipped with misogyny, and justifications for a use of the Earth that grew into misuse.

In the Christian west, the natural world has been framed as a resource for men's use created by a father-god. In the Biblical story, woman is also created by the same father-god as a resource—a 'helpmeet'—for man, like the beasts and herbs with which he has been likewise endowed.

In India, the Rig-Veda and other early texts express similar sentiments, constructing the woman as a resource for her husband. It states that even if a woman's husband is an idiot or a drunk she must serve him 'absolutely', as though he were her god. Scripturally her body belongs to him, and the children she bears are part of his resources.

*Almighty God, you have created this womb. Women may be born somewhere else
but sons should be born from this womb.*

Atharva-Veda 6:11:3

The father-sky-god religions of history haven't agreed on much. But they have agreed on one thing—and that's the need to subdue and control both nature and women. [For more from Indian authorities on the traditional status of women, see material and links in 'Further Study and Resources, below.]

The Specific worlds of *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* contemplate the many ways in which women's bodies and the Earth have been conflated and the consequences of such conflation. Eco-feminism states that under patriarchal capitalism, women have suffered the same fate as the Earth. They have been sold and bought, and used as though their bodies were morally inert resources. This conflation continues to create conditions for the maltreatment of both women and the environment.

EAT THE SKY, DRINK THE OCEAN & THE GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean will support and enrich learning across the following capabilities:

- literacy
- critical and creative thinking
- personal and social competence
- ethical behaviour
- intercultural understanding.

It provides a rich resource for looking at South Asian culture and history. Through its focus on women and girls it also provides opportunities to experience the nature of a contemporary struggle for social equality.

EAT THE SKY, DRINK THE OCEAN & THE CURRICULUM: DETAILS & ACTIVITIES

LITERATURE

Literature 1: Speculative fiction – Sci-Fi with no Martians

Extrapolate

Definition: to form an opinion or to make an estimate about something from known facts:

To project, extend, or expand (known data or experience) into an area not known or experienced so as to arrive at a usually conjectural knowledge of the unknown area <*extrapolates* present trends to construct an image of the future>

Origin: Latin *extra* outside + English *-polate* (as in *interpolate*)

First known use 1874

[<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/extrapolate?show=0&t=1417498055>]

Speculative fiction is a literary genre that looks at current events in science and technology, politics, culture and philosophy, and from this study extrapolates possibilities. Like all fiction, it asks *What If?*—but in SpecFic the question is not entirely open. It is a type of fiction that discusses worlds that *could* exist, although of course ideas about what *could* or *could not* exist vary. The genre is similar to Science Fiction in that it imagines things not currently possible.

Margaret Atwood, who wrote one of the most accomplished SpecFics, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), has defined the difference between Science Fiction and SpecFic thus:

What I mean by "science fiction" is those books that descend from HG Wells' The War of the Worlds, which treats of an invasion by tentacled Martians shot to Earth in metal canisters – things that could not possibly happen – whereas, for me, "speculative fiction" means plots that descend from Jules Verne's books about submarines and balloon travel and such – things that really could happen but just hadn't completely happened when the authors wrote the books. I would place my own books in this second category: no Martians.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/oct/14/margaret-atwood-road-to-ustopia>]

One of the appeals of SpecFic is that it can take a contemporary set of events and attitudes and ask *What If* they continued into the future unchecked. Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* was written at a time in the west when women were moving into the work force in huge numbers and beginning to build wealth and autonomy. Atwood's book speaks to the social anxiety these changes were bringing about, both in men and in women. It speculates on the fragility of women's new agency, and, extrapolating from the long history of female oppression, creates a world in which second wave feminism is only a short-lived experiment.

(There is an ongoing discussion among critics and authors about the use of the term 'SpecFic'. Some say that it is a term used only by authors who are afraid of being exiled to the literary ghetto of science fiction, a popular but traditionally *low* genre within English Lit. Margaret Atwood addresses these interesting questions in the article referred to above.)

Short stories are excellent vehicles for SpecFic because there's enough room to develop an intriguing real world research-based concept, to swing a cat in fact, but not so much room as to lose focus in too much detail about that cat. In the face of the wealth of possible material an author needs to choose a focus. When writing a new world an author must decide upfront what part of that world to frame in the story. Try to tell the whole world and all its new (and old) science, its new (and old) beliefs, and you will quickly be lost in bogs of detail, plagued by gnarled clouds of specific research.

The American Science Fiction writer Robert Heinlein (1907-1988) said that you have two choices in the writing of SpecFic: you can write about people or you can write about gadgets. Stories about people include exploring extrapolations of sociology, philosophy or politics. George Orwell's *1984* is a people-focused story. Assuming your speculative world has not *de-evolved* (as in the *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* story 'Swallow the Moon') it will be bristling with interesting and/or appalling gadgets anyway.

Remember: gadgets are not the story—people are the story.

Activity: plan and research a SpecFic story

Working through the stages below, students can research and plan (and later go on to write) their own SpecFic short story. Once written they can be collected together into the class's own anthology of SpecFic literature. As it is in the nature of SpecFic and science fiction to encode the anxieties and aspirations of a particular time, so any anthology of such speculative stories becomes an interesting snapshot of its time. Put it in the school library for later teachers and classes.

1. CHOOSE A SUBJECT for extrapolation and speculation.

Areas you might look into include:

Recent science. Take notes because no matter how wonderful the science is, you will forget its details. Correct details make for well-written realism. Always choose what fascinates you most. There are many areas of science to consider:

- medical science (e.g. the extension of the human life span)
- space exploration (e.g. human settlement on Mars)
- climate (e.g. cataclysmic weather events)
- volcanism (e.g. volcanic particles blanketing the earth)
- particle physics (e.g. nano technology)
- evolutionary theory (e.g. unexpected evolution of new creatures)
- Recent explorations of the deepest parts of the ocean (e.g. the strange life forms found in the Marianna Trench)

Recent political events. Some recent events with great possibilities for extrapolation include:

- The increasing millions of people displaced by wars: the proliferating refugee camps and detention centres of the world.
- International terrorism
- Lack of support for traditional political parties and reduced participation in democratic elections.
- Aboriginal deaths in custody
- Suggestions that welfare payments be regulated via special debit cards which prevent the purchase of products deemed harmful or unnecessary for poor people.

NOTE: Indian author Anita Roy advises caution when making stories that travel through time. Timespace is not an easy thing. She quotes the tenth Doctor Who:

‘People assume that time is a strict progression of cause and effect, but actually, from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint it’s more like a big ball of “wibbly-wobbly ... timey-wimey ... stuff.”’

[*Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* p.206]

2. CHOOSE THE DILEMMA which is extrapolated from your research.

Ask yourself *What if?*

Ask it at every stage.

For instance, continuing from the above possibilities:

- *What if* I had to sail to New Zealand in a small boat to escape persecution in Australia?
- *What if* a travelling glacier, big as a mountain, appeared on the horizon?
- *What if* the changes of evolution were supercharged by climate change and loss of species? What might evolve and where?

3. BRAINSTORM what might happen

The planning of SpecFic stories responds well to brainstorming in groups. So once you have a dilemma, allow time for lively discussion of its ideas and implications, preferably in groups of 4-6.

Literature 2: Text and context: the nature of collaboration

Collaboration

Definition: to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavour

Origin: Late Latin *collaboratus*, past participle of *collaborare* to labour together, from Latin *com-* + *laborare* to labour

First known use 1871

[\[http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collaboration?show=0&t=1417498356\]](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collaboration?show=0&t=1417498356)

A collaboration is a shared project in which no one person's input is more important than any other's. There is no permanent leader and each contribution to the whole is crucial. Working with one other person on a shared project is a valuable experience. Learning to collaborate is a key life skill with implications for the workplace, home and life in the community.

Firstly, collaboration disconnects work, especially creative work, from the immediate concerns of personal ego.

For me, the process of cutting the words, phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, as Priya's [art] work made mine redundant, was both confronting and wonderfully liberating.

(Kate Constable in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* p.204)

Secondly, collaboration gives people opportunities to learn flexibility, and it moves them out of their comfort zones.

I didn't know what to expect ... What if I hated what she came up with? What if she couldn't stand what I wrote?

(Kate Constable, p.203)

Collaborations in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* were generally of two types: either two writers worked together in various ways to create a story in words, or a writer and a visual artist worked to create a story in words and pictures. The methods of the collaborators were varied and this is another benefit of learning to collaborate. It encourages people to get creative and proactive about their *way of working*, not only about the subject of the work.

Some of the collaborators, like Amruta Patil, started with a strong idea and then honed it through conversation with their partner. Others, such Manjula Padmanabhan and Kirsty Murray, alternated writing passages of their story with no conversation at all.

...we neither discussed the plot in advance nor any of the characters, setting, general theme...you get the idea? Yup. We flew blind into a hurricane of words and emerged with a story.

(*Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* p.213)

Authors and visual artists sent their collaborations back and forth.

I drew scratchy cartoon-people all over Isobelle's scripts, she wrote and pasted all the drawings I made - each helping the other see what words could tell and how pictures could show.

(Prabha Mallya, p.216)

Some of the collaborators played games across cyberspace. Kirsty Murray and Manjula Padmanabhan played a game known to Manjula as *Consequences* and to Kirsty as *Exquisite Corpses*, to develop their story 'The Blooming'.

Activity: a collaborative story

COLLABORATE with one other person on a short fictional story. You can meet in person, or communicate via email, Skype, SMS or other media.

DECIDE whether it will be a story in words-only or rendered in words and pictures. WHO will do the words and who will do the pictures?

CHOOSE one of the following methods to start the creative process.

- Start anywhere and alternate between collaborators. The draft is passed back and forth, without comment, until a basic finish is achieved
- Start with a 'theme'. Talk together about things that matter to you. Find themes you both feel matter and tell each other stories about them. When you find something that makes you both angry at the same time, choose that as your starting point. Any strong shared feeling will support the process, but anger is good because it means you've found a point of injustice about which you both care. Injustice is a great starter for a person-based story
- Have fun! Play games together that stimulate creative ideas. Search online for creative exercises to play together. Sometimes just putting two unexpected things together can elicit the genesis of stories.

Penni Russon and I were quite keen to base our stories around a unique artefact. So we took turns to come up with lists of five physical objects and five abstract modifiers, and then voted for our favourites to combine them into a really cool-sounding magical thing. 'Stone dream', 'wrong photo' and 'secret sky' were all contenders ... till we decided on 'memory lace'.

[Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean p.216]

Note: In the best collaborations between a writer and visual artist the pictures *extend* the words. They are not illustrations of what is already present in the writing. The pictures add something *more* to the text, and thereby deepen and extend its meaning and scope. This is in keeping with the idea of collaborators being equal creators.

[See Further Study and Resources, below, for a list of graphic novels.]

Literature 3: A picture's worth a thousand words.

1. ANALYSE 'The Runners' by Isobelle Carmody and Prabha Mallya (p.144). A quick glance will tell you that it is dystopian, futuristic, and *Manga*-like in its style.

What aspects of the graphics show this?

What aspects of the language tell us this?

A table might help:

	Shown by the graphics	Told in the language
Setting: mood/atmosphere, details of place		
Characters: physical description, how do they move? how do they act and react towards other characters?	<u>Geneva</u> <u>Hel</u>	<u>Geneva</u> <u>Hel</u>
Action		
Transitions between scenes		

CHOOSE a graphic story (or a section of one) and transform it into a written story.

Follow the language style of the graphic story's text and expand the text to include elements of the story that were conveyed by the graphics: mood/atmosphere, details of setting, description of characters - not just how they look, but how they feel, act and react, how they move, what they are thinking etc.

BRAINSTORM vocabulary, phrases, sentences that could be used in your story. It might help to use a table similar to the one above.

PHOTOCOPY OR SCAN the section of the graphic story you are going to re-tell in words only and lay it out frame by frame down the left side of the page. Write the corresponding story down the right side of the page. (You can, of course, include the original words that appear in the graphic version.) When you are finished, you should be able to cut the graphic frames away and be left with a section of story that makes sense and conveys the same mood, setting and action of the original frames.

OR

CHOOSE a written story (or a section of one) and transform it into a graphic story.

Match your illustration style to the themes and language style of the written text. Select which parts of the written story will be needed for your illustration frames. Include dialogue as well as narration. Perhaps you will need to change the text to fit in with the graphics, or *add* some text of your own.

LITERACY

1. Words & Pictures

Subvert

Definition:

- a. to overturn or overthrow from the foundation
- b. to pervert or corrupt by an undermining of morals, allegiance, or faith

Origin: Middle English, from Anglo-French *subvertir*, from Latin *subvertere*, literally, to turn from beneath, from *sub-* + *vertere* to turn

First known use 14th century

[\[http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subvert\]](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subvert)

Humans communicated in pictures long before they communicated in words. Early cave art can still speak to us across millennia, communicating simply and vividly what was important to the communities by whom it was produced.

[See Neolithic cave art @ <http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/lascaux/index.php>

Words have more ways of being misread than do pictures. People have understood words to be slippery for centuries, and much has been written about language's capacity to persuade and distort truth. [See links below.] But over millennia pictures too have taken on layers of meaning: the adoption of the rainbow as the emblem of the Gay Rights movement of the 1970s relies on widespread reception of the rainbow as an image of diversity within unity, as well as a sign (derived from Biblical sources) of promise and security.

Another more recent example is provided by the street artist Banksy and his simple black templates of beetles, which have become powerful emblems of capitalism and class. These simple images, stencilled on city walls, of larger-than-life black beetles scurrying about at street level are potent symbols of protest reminding us of the myriad hidden vulnerabilities in our community. Alongside bacteria, beetles are the most numerous beings in our world. Banksy's work is understood to be subversive politically. The beetles stand in for the hard-working masses of any city, living hand-to-mouth.

They are a plea.

They are a warning.

But they're only pictures of beetles.

Femininity is historically understood to be 'like' nature: it is dangerous if uncontained and uncontrolled. Until recently all violent destructive natural events were named for women.

Through consistent use of visual metaphors linking femaleness with nature, our cultures have manipulated anxieties regarding natural disaster in order to control women. This visual language is so pervasive that we hardly notice it. The graphic stories in *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* give us the opportunity to become more aware of it.

Activity: Pictures of you/pictures of me. Analysing images of femininity

The short graphic fiction 'Swallow the Moon', with words by Kate Constable and pictures by Priya Kunyan [p 1], uses a shared visual language to earth the story firmly in the ground of a recognisable cultural femininity. The story provides an opportunity to locate, define, and interpret some common historical notions about femininity through the medium of pictures.

1. Make a CLOSE STUDY of the images in the graphic story 'Swallow the Moon.' Each technical decision has been carefully considered by the artist, and rendered toward some particular end.

CONSIDER the following visual elements:

- placement of objects in the visual field
- relative size of the objects: how big or small are they in relation to other objects?
- light and shade
- perspective

ASK yourself questions such as:

- *Why* is this object so big/so small? What is the effect?
- Where in the layout is the object placed and why? What is the effect of placing the object so? Consider *centre* and *side* placement, as well as *high* or *low* positioning of objects within the field
- Consider the light. What is in shade? What is lit? What is backlit or sidelit? What effect do these light elements have upon me?
- From whose perspective are we viewing the scene? Are we looking through the eyes of one of the figures? Are we looking up at the scene, or down on the scene? What is the effect of the perspective? Does it remind you of other art works, or some scene you remember from film or TV? Artists use intertextuality just as writers do.

2. LOCATE repeating emblems that you think represent femininity. In small groups DISCUSS and ANALYSE the images. Make a LIST of those emblems you think still have currency as visual metaphors for femaleness, and those that are losing their power.

Consider:

- the moon and the sea
- clothing or lack of it
- eggs
- animals and birds

3. CONTEMPLATE the ways in which the emblems are used in the story.

The emblems work in the conventional manner, conflating women with the Earth.

Ask yourself:

- Is this connection with the Earth represented as a positive or negative relationship?

- Do the images subvert or support the conventional representations?

There are no right answers!

Pictures seem more natural to us than words and the effect of this is that we believe what we see in a picture more readily than we believe what we are reading. But pictures lie as easily as words. It is a useful skill to be able to read imagery for the same manipulation we are alert to in words. Sometimes it helps to write in words what you are seeing in the image.

Write it simply and a biased perspective will emerge. In this case 'biased' does not mean 'prejudiced'. It means that the story takes a recognisable position of some sort.

My example

The first images of the girls filing through the night forest depicts a sky in which the moon as unnaturally huge. Its glow lights the forest and especially a line of girls filing along a forest path. The girls are at first just a line of impersonal shadows with a likeness to the shadowy trees. We see the girls from many different perspectives in the forest. In one of the perspectives we look down through the canopy where a bird is protecting her eggs. The girls wear shapeless robes and are barefoot, like traditional tribal women. But they can't be all from one ethnic tribe. Some are dark, some are fair, some look Asian, some western. Some are long-haired, some close-cropped, some curly. The hair of the protagonist curls into an image of a wave when she says she can hear the sea.

Extension: The power of defining & emblems of 'masculinity'

Politically and economically dominant people hold the power of *defining* society—they get to define the 'nature' of people who are their traditional subordinates. It is a similar phenomenon to history being written by the victors and suffers from the same deficiency. The simple lumping together of people into groups sharing physical characteristics such as gender or skin colour creates a false homogeneity.

However, such grouping creates an 'object' that can then be studied as though every member of the group were the same. Historically, men have studied 'women' in the same way European-derived people have studied 'black' people. Hence the west's talk of a 'woman problem' and a 'black problem'—there was never any mention of a historic 'white man problem'. These studies of the female attempted to locate some *universal, essential* femininity that every woman embodies.

There are more emblems standing for an essential 'feminine' than there are standing for an essential 'masculine'. It is enlightening to investigate the accepted symbols of masculinity. Students can be asked, while watching TV, engaging with their devices or reading a book, to note any significant images or objects that they think are being used as emblematic of masculinity. An interesting class discussion should ensue.

The questions are the same as for a study of emblems of femininity:

- What does the emblem represent?
- What does the emblem suggest about masculinity, and therefore men?
- How do the young men in the class relate to the emblem? Do they agree that the emblem does in fact represent some *specific* quality of maleness?
- What if a man doesn't relate to the emblem or display its suggested quality or behaviour? Is he *not* a man? Is he a *bad* man? Is he a *woman*? Is he *mentally ill*? Is he *homosexual*?
- How do the young women in the class feel about the emblem? What if they relate to and engage in the quality or behaviour suggested by the emblem? Are they *not* women? Are they *men*? Are they *bad* women? Are they *mentally ill*? Are they scoring *political points*? Are they *lesbians*?

This material makes for confronting and difficult conversations so the guidelines for group discussion should be scrupulously followed:

- Speak honestly but not disrespectfully
- Use 'I' statements: 'I feel', 'I think'
- Take turns to speak and do not interrupt

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING—SOUTH ASIAN (INDIAN) PERSPECTIVES

'Anarkali' & the re-versioning of folk tales

The subcontinent of India is an ancient culture rich in folk tale and romance. Apart from its grand epics such as the *Mahabharata* ('great story'), there are popular collections of smaller tales, such as the Hitopadesha tales.

In Sanskrit, the word 'Hita' means welfare and 'Upadesha' means counsel so these tales are, like most folk tales, stories with a lesson. Here is a link to an online collection of some of these stories:

<http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-folktales/hitopadesha-tales/index.html>

The 547 Jataka Buddhist tales were composed in 300BC. These tales are an important part of Buddhist culture and literature. The stories tell of previous lives of the Buddha including incarnations as animals, birds and human beings. The stories are set in Benares, which is a city with Buddhist historical meaning in north central India. Here is a link to an online collection of some of these stories.

<http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-folktales/jataka-tales/index.html>

Like European fairy and folk tales, these stories have much advice to impart to the young and inexperienced; they abound in cultural stereotypes and archetypes; and do not shrink from bloodthirsty punishments. Their heroes and villains are clearly delineated.

The story of Anarkali, the beautiful slave girl, has become a pseudo-history much as the British tales of King Arthur have, and is as widely known in India as King Arthur is in Britain. The tale has been made into many movies and has inspired a type of women's clothing, the Anarkali suit. Its meaning has moved from a warning about caste transgression and female sexual agency, to a modern plea for the rights of romantic love.

Anarkali means 'the flower bud of the pomegranate'.

Activity: Compare and contrast treatments of 'Anarkali'

Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean contains two stories that engage with folk tales. One of these is 'Anarkali' (Annie Zaidi and Mandy Ord), a retelling of a traditional Indian love story of the same title.

In the following activity, students read versions of the traditional story and compare and contrast them with Zaidi and Ord's version.

1. READ at least three versions of the traditional tale of Anarkali. LIST the stories' repeating elements as well as their divergences from each other.

Here are four retellings of the traditional tale online. If you find another version you prefer, use that.

- Short version with comments by modern readers in sidebar <http://allwomenstalk.com/12-most-famous-love-stories-of-all-time/12?/>
- Retelling by a non-writer with commentary on the unfolding events <http://defence.pk/threads/real-story-of-salim-anarkali-written-by-myself.126957/>

- Retelling linked to architectural feature: as a tourist attraction
http://www.ualberta.ca/~rnoor/tomb_anarkali.html
- Brief plot description of the film version, 'Mughal-e-Azam'*
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal-e-Azam>

2. READ Zaidi and Ord's re-version of the tale.

3. LIST the ways in which it deviates from the retellings above, and the ways in which it remains the same.

4. In small groups COMPARE and CONTRAST these elements of the versions of 'Anarkali'. What has changed? What is similar? What are entirely new elements? CONSIDER the following in your analysis of what is encoded in the story:

- Changes in women's expectations
- Changes in men's expectations (note the reaction of the Prince when Anarkali wants to rescue him)
- Notions of the rights of romantic or 'true' love

[*Students may like to view the famous film 'Mughal-e-Azam' (which could be called the 'Gone with The Wind' of India). The flavour of this early Bollywood classic can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdOS-0sIW-Y> .]

EXTENSION—HISTORY YR 11 & 12: TROUBLE WITH FEMINISM?

Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean provides an opportunity to enrich learning in the VCE study area of revolutions and social change. Its focus on feminism through the lens of two cultures at different points in the process of emancipation underscores the mutable nature of societies, while at the same time exposing the protean, persistent nature of cultural ideas and attitudes. It provides material for discussing:

- the struggles for human rights
- the transformation of social and economic lives through these struggles
- the changing nature and influence of ideologies

Feminism was one of the major political revolutions of the twentieth century. It was as important as the Civil Rights Movement and the rise and fall of Socialism. The world looks and behaves differently today due to this revolution. The people of the West have become richer and healthier because of the widespread entrance of highly educated middle-class women into their work forces. (Working-class women always had to work, but that's another story.)

In the wake of the Delhi attack the outpouring of anger and grief among the Indian community worldwide is a sign of declining patriarchal values within that community. Close study of the aforementioned Delhi rape and murder and its consequences would provide an opportunity for older Australian students to observe the progress of a feminist protest movement, in a context which clarifies the continuing need for such social revolutions.

See [Appendix 2](#) for discussion starters.

FURTHER STUDY & RESOURCES

Three views of 'femininity' from Indian philosophical sources:

'Lust, anger, greed, pride etc., constitute the most powerful army of Ignorance. But among them all the fiercest and the most troublesome is that incarnation of Maya called woman.'

Listen, O sage: the Puranas, the Vedas and the saints declare that woman is like the vernal season to the forest of ignorance. Nay, like the hot season she dries up all the ponds and lakes of Japa ... Again, lust, anger, pride, and jealousy are so many frogs as it were; like the rainy season woman is the only agency that gladdens them all. Even so latent desires of a vicious type are like a bed of lilies, to which, like the autumn, she is ever agreeable. All the different virtues are like a bed of lotuses; like the middle of winter, woman, who is a source of base pleasure, blights them all.'

From Tulasi Ramayana Sri Ramacharitamansa; Aranya Kanda 43-44

In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent.

[Manu-Smṛti 5:148]

Indra himself hath said, The mind of woman brooks not discipline, Her intellect hath little weight.

[Rig-Veda 8:33:17]

Works on manipulating language to political ends:

George Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language': 1946 article.

Full text @ <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm>

Don Watson, *Weasel Words*

SpecFic titles & stories

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

George Orwell, *1984*

H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Ray Bradbury, 'All Summer in a Day' – a short story @

http://www.btbooces.org/Downloads/6_All%20Summer%20in%20a%20Day%20by%20Ray%20Bradbury.pdf

Pat Cadigan, *Synners*

Women SpecFic writers

A good list of women SciFi and SpecFic writers back to the seventeenth century's Margaret Cavendish and her *The Blazing World* can be found @

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_speculative_fiction

SpecFic titles concerning gender interrogation

Joanna Russ, *The Female Man*

Ursula K Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

An online journal devoted to publishing short stories that interrogate gender through SF and SpecFic literature: Scigentasy @ <http://www.scigentasy.com/>

Re-versions of folk tales

There are many wonderful younger readers' picture books that can be used as an introduction to re-versions. The first three titles are books of this type. The next three titles are suitable for readers aged 14+.

Eugene Trivizas, *The Three Little Wolves & the Big, Bad Pig*

Spike Milligan, *Sir Nobonk & the Dreadful, Naughty, Nasty Dragon*

(These two titles interrogate masculine roles & expectations)

Babette Cole, *Princess Smartypants*

Qiron Adhikary, *Feminist Folk Tales from India*

Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber & Other Stories*

Gregory Maguire, *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*

A great overview of the re-versioning of fairy tales, including a list of popular contemporary re-versions in novel form can be found @

<http://thepulppress.com/8-revisionist-fairy-tales-and-why-you-should-love-them/>

Two religions on the 'Woman Problem'

Quotes from the holy books & commentaries of Hinduism @

[http://www.hinduism.co.za/women.htm#Wifely Virtues](http://www.hinduism.co.za/women.htm#Wifely_Virtues)

And from the Bible @ <http://www.openbible.info/topics/women>

On collaboration

You Tube: a panel discussion on how to collaborate toward a graphic novel @

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZCWShamh-g>

Examples of collaboration:

Shake Girl – a graphic novel online created in one semester by fifteen students and two instructors at Stanford University USA @ <http://web.stanford.edu/group/cwstudents/shakegirl>

Fables Vol 1: Legends in Exile Bill Willingham, in collaboration with illustrators: Lan Medina, Steve Leialoha, Craig Hamilton & James Jean

Watchmen Alan Moore, with illustrator & letterer Dave Gibbons, and colourist John Higgins

Indian material online

Tourist site: Anarkali's tomb @

http://www.ualberta.ca/~rnoor/tomb_anarkali.html

A good overview of the many diverse types of Indian traditional literature @

<http://www.anonlineindia.com/information/literature.htm>

India's Great Story, the Mahabharata, @

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/maha/>

ABOUT THE EDITORS AND TEACHERS NOTES WRITER

Kirsty Murray

Kirsty Murray has written eleven novels for children and young adults - most recently *The Four Seasons of Lucy McKenzie* and *The Year It All Ended* - plus many short stories, articles, and several non-fiction books. Her novels have won numerous awards, including an Aurealis award and the NSW Premier's History Award. Kirsty has been a writer-in-residence at two Indian universities and a participant in the Bookwallah Roving Writers Festival, presenting at literary events across India.

www.kirstymurray.com

Anita Roy

Anita Roy lives in Delhi and cycles to work at Zubaan, a small independent feminist publishing house. Her stories and non-fiction essays have appeared in a number of anthologies, and she has completed a first novel for children. www.anitaroy.net

Payal Dhar

Payal Dhar has written seven books for children and young adults, and numerous short stories. She's also a freelance editor and writer, and writes on computers, technology, books, reading, games and anything else that catches her interest. www.writeside.net

Ananda Braxton-Smith

Ananda is a community journalist and author. She has written four books for young adult readers. These include a history of the bubonic plague from 1347 - 1900 entitled *The Death: the horror of the plague* (2009), and the novels of the Secrets of Carrick series: *Merrow* (2010), *Tantony* (2011) and *Ghostheart* (2013). *Merrow* was a CBCA 2010 Notable Book, and was also shortlisted for a 2010 Aurealis award. She has also published a novel for younger readers, *Plenty* (2014). With her husband she sings in a bluegrass band called the HillWilliams, and lives in Victoria's Dandenong Ranges with him and two young adult sons.

APPENDIX 1

Text descriptions & summaries

<p><i>'Swallow the Moon'</i></p> <p>by Kate Constable & Priya Kuriyan</p>	<p><i>graphic text</i></p>	<p>A young woman undergoes initiation into adulthood through intimate contact with the sea and the moon. At first seemingly set in some 'ancient' past amongst a 'tribal' people, 'Swallow the Moon' eventually reveals itself as occurring instead in a de-evolved, post-apocalyptic future. Traditional emblems of femininity are used liberally and uncritically, providing opportunities for students to locate and critique their use without authorial bias.</p>
<p><i>'Little Red Suit'</i></p> <p>by Justine Larbalestier</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>In this re-version of the fairy tale, fifteen-year-old Poppy lives in a 2m x 2m Sydney apartment with her mother and has never seen rain. In this climate-change scenario people survive through their environmental suits, which contain communication devices and provide recycled water and air. Against all advice Poppy leaves Sydney to visit her grandmother, who refuses to live in the city, and along the way is stalked by a male voice inside her suit.</p>
<p><i>'Cooking Time'</i></p> <p>by Anita Roy</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Stella's best friend Mandira is missing. It is fifty years since the Dying Out and the last of the great food wars. Now the last multinational, AgroGlobal, provides only tubes of goo called 'Newtri' and in a world empty of real food the most popular TV show is 'Masterchef'. To find their ingredients contestants in this speculative version of the competition must travel back in time, which is where Mandira has gone missing.</p>
<p><i>'Anarkali'</i></p> <p>by Annie Zaidi & Mandy Ord</p>	<p><i>graphic text</i></p>	<p>This re-version of the romantic Indian folk tale has a dancer entombed alive as punishment for her sexual relationship with the prince. In the original story the dancer dies but here she manages to escape and goes on to rescue the prince. That universal female emblem, the Earth, opens itself to Anarkali and allows her passage through its soil and rock, to freedom.</p>
<p><i>'Cast Out'</i></p> <p>by Samhita Arni</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Karthini is born in a village where both boys and girls are born who have the gift of magic. But only the boys' magic is trained: girls with the gift are killed through being tied hand-and-foot and put to sea in a barrel. When, at the onset of her period, Karthini suffers this fate, she is rescued at sea by a crew of woman sailors on a ship called 'The Pearl', and taken to an island where her magic will be recognised and trained.</p>
<p><i>'Weft'</i></p> <p>by Alyssa Brugman</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>A young woman sells a kidney to finance the cosmetic surgery that will see her remain physically acceptable into her forties—after which she plans to sell a cornea to finance the surgery that will maintain her looks through to her death.</p>
<p><i>'The Wednesday Room'</i></p> <p>by Kuzhali Manickavel & Lily Mae Martin</p>	<p><i>graphic text</i></p>	<p>Kavya is filling in her request form for a Complete and Irreversible Standardisation procedure, in which she will be relieved of her capacity to see and communicate with supernatural beings—or in the preferred terminology, 'substandard aberrations'. She is being helped to pass the appraisal for the procedure by a leprechaun.</p>

<p><i>'Catcalls'</i></p> <p>by Margo Lanagan</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Every week day, Melitta is sexually threatened by a group of adult males on her way to school. Nobody will help and her father tells her the men do it because she's pretty. Eventually she is protected and dignified by the support of her school community, both boys and girls. This story interrogates common misconceptions about sexual harassment.</p>
<p><i>'Cool'</i></p> <p>by Manjula Padmanabhan</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Sex biases create hardship and suffering in the lives of boys and men, as well as girls and women. In this story a young man lives and works in space collecting Spit, the clean fuel that a future-Earth requires. He lives and works in various types of 'pod' and has little contact with other human beings. As a result he has fallen in love with a virtual human female called Miss Leila, who keeps him working by flattery and the manipulation of his desire to be 'heroic'.</p>
<p><i>'Appetite'</i></p> <p>by Amruta Patil</p>	<p><i>graphic text</i></p>	<p>Coral Polyp is hungry for love and for life but such an appetite in a girl is unacceptable. A girl's job is to learn to love and want nothing in return, her mother tells her. This story investigates notions of women's supposedly natural timid desires, and the societal demand upon women to display smallness in all its meanings.</p>
<p><i>'Mirror Perfect'</i></p> <p>by Kirsty Murray</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Teenage Ettie sees herself in mirrors, glass and other reflective surfaces variously as overweight, lumpy, spotty, greasy-haired and gap-toothed. However, in one mysterious clothing store the mirror shows her slim and perfect, and the pull of this polished version of herself has her falling into the mirror. An exploration of women's schizophrenic and complicated relationship with the mirror.</p>
<p><i>Arctic Light</i></p> <p>by Vandana Singh</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Sixteen-year-old Shaila is a climate change activist, inspired by the memory of her mother, now dead, who was a scientist tracking the rate of glacier-retreat in the Himalayas. Shaila's first action is to protest the drilling of Arctic oil, during which she oversees the cyber-dissemination of footage showing oil company employees being violent with protesters. A consideration of the relationship between mothers and daughters, and of the role modelling of physical courage as part of a girl's inheritance.</p>
<p><i>'The Runners'</i></p> <p>by Isobelle Carmody & Prabha Mallya</p>	<p><i>graphic text</i></p>	<p>Geneva tries to save her brother, Hel, from a life of sex-based discrimination after all 'true' men have been killed in a set of historic Motherwars. In this dystopian future, biological males have been replaced by part-biological, part-cybernetic men, stripped of a predisposition to violence. An introduction to exploring notions of genetic 'maleness'—and by extension, genetic 'femaleness'.</p>
<p><i>'The Blooming'</i></p> <p>by Manjula Padmanabhan & Kirsty Murray</p>	<p><i>play script</i></p>	<p>Remote-study partners Schaum of the planet MaggiNoo and Jerk of planet Earth do not understand or like each other. Their planets are mutually benefiting from the trade of MaggiNoo dung and as a result the population is forced into unwanted social and inter-cultural contact. An unexpected alliance between Schaum and the small human clones sent to MaggiNoo to perform menial labour brings about an overthrow of Jerk and the mercenary Earthlings. A representation in theatrical form of class struggle and nationalism (or in this case, planetism).</p>

<p><i>'What A Stone Can't Feel'</i> by Penni Russon</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>Vega's best friend Bonnie is dying of cancer. They share the secret of Vega's ability to enter objects with her consciousness. When Bonnie dies Vega extends her consciousness into the corpse. A consideration of friendship between young women, and of the nature of loss.</p>
<p><i>'Memory Lace'</i> by Payal Dhar</p>	<p><i>prose text</i></p>	<p>A nameless person being sold into sex-based slavery looks at their reflection in a mirror. The person sees a veiled face framed by soft curls and clanking beads. A manipulation of gender profiling in which layers of feminine signifiers persuade readers that the aforementioned person is female. He is not.</p>
<p><i>'Back Stage Pass'</i> by Nicki Greenberg</p>	<p><i>graphic text</i></p>	<p>An actor called Ophelia, while waiting backstage to play the Shakespearean character Ophelia, is interviewed by an entertainment reporter. They discuss, with rising irritation on Ophelia's part, her drowning in the play as though it were a real event. A look at the conflation of real and fictional in current popular media, with a critique of the effects of a masculinist canon on women in the creative arts.</p>

APPENDIX 2

Discussion starter on relevance of Feminism.

Feminism as a 'progressive' political movement has changed focus over time. In the west the revolution has moved from the edges of society into the centre, and shifted from a focus on freedom to a focus on wealth. Some critics believe that in recent decades 'wealth' has replaced 'choice' as the prime value of western feminism. Comparisons of wealth and assets have become the main measure of the success of feminism.

Yet even by this measure, feminism is not progressing well. Women's wealth constantly falls below men's—recent findings from Curtin University show that the wealth and assets of young women in Australia has dropped even below 2002 levels.

By far the biggest wealth disparity was between younger men and women – a typical single man under 35 had assets worth \$120,200 in 2010 which was \$56,700 - or 89 per cent - more than the average for women in the same age cohort. That's up from a wealth gap in that age group of \$9,000, or 16 per cent, in 2002.

[http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.ac;jsessionid=0C430727AE4D31A9A6DF78D98F7F3C63?sy=nstore&pb=all_ffx&dt=selectRange&dr=1month&so=relevance&sf=text&sf=headline&rc=10&rm=200&sp=brs&cls=7532&clsPage=1&docID=SAG141109K44FH6UR509]

Australian young adults live with feminist values but generally will not openly subscribe to those values. Young women overwhelmingly believe that publicly identifying as a feminist will lead to their ostracism—and they may be right. These sentiments exist side-by-side with female achievement at school or work, big plans and expectations for the future, and sexual and social freedom.

Many young men openly express confusion and/or hostility to the word 'feminism'.

It is a word that causes embarrassment. Why is this so?

Do young black people feel shame about the Civil Rights Movements? Do young gay people feel embarrassment about Mardi Gras? Do young Australian Aboriginals shun the mention of Mabo?

For most young Australians the reasons for the feminist revolution are lost to history. After the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, women in Australia moved with great confidence into the nation's paid workforce, into its political life, and into visible positions of influence in most spheres. To a young person, the country is full of women working in important jobs, active in politics—and everywhere enjoying their independence. It looks like that fight has been won.

But, as with race discrimination, this is not the reality.

In Australia the average full-time working man will be paid between 15 per cent and 18 percent more than a woman in the same position. That figure has not moved much for two decades, despite the notion of 'equal pay for work of equal value' being enshrined in Australia in 1969. Women do *not* pay between 15 and 18 percent less for rent, food and other living costs. Discrimination on the basis of sex was made illegal in 1984.

That earnings disparity and wealth gap has been growing lately. In 2014, it hit the biggest disparity since figures began to be collected in 2004.

[<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/lower-pay-lower-wealth-a-womans-lot-in-life-20140923-1013rx.html>]

Women still do on average two thirds of unpaid household work despite working outside the home, and mothers in the paid work force spend double the time caring for children under 14 years of age than do fathers.

In addition, women still suffer from particular forms of sexual violence and social coercion. Women's bodies are still treated as economic resources and many girls and women still treat

themselves as such. Levels of contemporary body-type fascism are causing serious dysmorphic disorders in young women. At least one educational authority has noted that the fastest growing group of students requiring home schooling are 'locked-in' girls: girls suffering anxiety, often expressed through, or accompanying, psycho-physical ailments.

In addition, adolescent psychologists report the emergence of a new clientele; that is, young men unable to enjoy their sexuality because their expectation of what girls look like has been trained by internet pornography. It is not only women who suffer from the present cultural preference for visually pre-adolescent female genitalia. Young men are being betrayed into sexual neuroses.

But the continuing need for feminist critique and activism is most apparent in a quick analysis of our particular political system.

We live in a capitalist democracy. Wealth and assets are the measure of worth. You are paid what you are 'worth': you are 'worth' what you are paid. You may agree or disagree with the basic premise of capitalism: that market forces will fix every problem including social inequity; but there's no arguing with that system's dominance of the public sphere.

Under capitalism a doctor is 'worth' more than a bus driver. There may be a limited argument for that statement but the logic of capital-as-worth leads to much more difficult cases. Under capitalism a teacher is 'worth' less than a soap opera actor. A cleaner is 'worth' less than a chef, and those who remove our rubbish are 'worth' less than those who remove our past life karmas. These statements collapse under very little scrutiny. The worth of a rubbish removalist is beyond wages. However, no matter what work a woman performs or how well she performs it, she is still commonly paid less than her male counterparts.

The average weekly ordinary time earnings of women working full-time were \$1,270.30 per week, compared to men who earned an average weekly wage of \$1,532.80 per week, making women's average earnings \$262.50 per week less than men.

[\[https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-03-04-Gender_Pay_Gap_factsheet_website.pdf\]](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-03-04-Gender_Pay_Gap_factsheet_website.pdf)

Class discussion on these issues is vital but needs to be treated carefully. As with the earlier discussion involving notions of femininity and masculinity, topics of sexual violence, body image and gender roles etc. make for confronting and difficult conversations, so the guidelines for group discussion should be scrupulously followed:

- Speak honestly but not disrespectfully
- Use 'I' statements: 'I feel', 'I think'
- Take turns to speak and do not interrupt
- Consider beginning with single-sex discussion groups before bringing both groups together.

Possible topics:

1. Comparing your lives and ambitions with those of your grandparents, what have young women and men gained from the feminist revolution in our society? What have they lost?
2. In what ways has male power been retained, for example, in the school, in the classroom, in the family, on the street?
3. What further gains should young feminists organise and fight for? Would young men support them?
4. Were the social and economic advances for women since World War II brought about by social protest movements or were they the result of the development of capitalism? E.g. more individualism = more sales of goods/more belief in consumer 'choice'.

5. Apart from inequity in income and respect/power, are there cultural differences between the classes of our society? Would 'bettering' yourself through higher education change your relationship with the rest of your family? Would choosing not to pursue higher education or a high income alienate you from your family?
6. List, and rank in terms of their desirability, changes that could be made to the social, economic and political structures of our society. Would you welcome these changes? List, and rank in terms of their probability, unexpected events that could bring about rapid economic, political or social change. How can we prepare for such unexpected and unknown events? What's our track record in dealing with them? (E.g. responses to the '9/11' terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York.)
7. Clothing is important not just for decency and comfort. A dress style is important to people as a means of self-expression in daily life. Idiosyncratic fashions have grown especially in the west where traditional clothing is no longer worn. The story of the Mughal slave girl Anarkali has inspired a trend in modern India for the creation of fashions in her style. An *Anarkali suit* is composed of a long flowing kurta, tight at the bodice and flowing from the waist in pleats, worn over leggings. Here's a link to a short history of that garment: <https://fashiontrendsandtipsblog.wordpress.com/tag/history-and-origin-of-anarkali-suits/>
 - What do you think about the recurring popularity of slave-girl styled clothing and jewellery: Anarkali suits, 'harem' pants, metal arm bands, anklet chains and 'dog' collars? These styles have been popular in the feminist west as well as more traditional countries.
 - What does the Anarkali suit fashion mean to you? Is it an expression of a desire to return to traditional sex roles; or is it a reclaiming and defusing of the symbols of female slavery? Or something else?
 - What does fashion mean to you? Who creates the ideas of fashion? Where do its ideas come from? Who physically makes it? Who buys it?
8. The graphic story 'The Runners' refers to 'the Motherwars'. What clues are there in the text to the history of the Motherwars: how they started, progressed, ended? Can you reconstruct the history of Geneva and Hel's world?
9. The stories 'Cast Out' and 'Weft' arose from their authors' discussions about 'the interaction between feminism and consumerism' or 'how capitalism and consumerism had co-opted the feminist movement'. (See p. 210-211 for author's comments on their collaboration.) What elements of these discussions can be teased out of the stories? Does knowing how the stories began change your reading of them?
10. In the story 'Mirror Perfect' Ettie is dismayed with her looks and haunted by her ideal mirror image. Have you ever felt that your looks 'don't measure up'?
 - Have you ever dismissed someone else because their looks 'don't measure up'?
 - In your own life, how strong is the social pressure to conform to specific ideas of beauty or handsomeness? Where do these pressures come from?
 - Why do some people choose to wear make-up? Why do some women choose not to wear make-up?