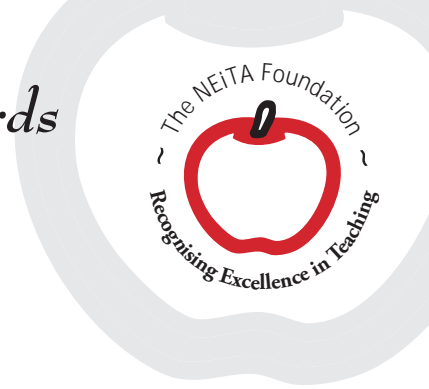


2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Veronica Lake

Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Diploma of Education
Applecross Senior High School, Ardross, Western Australia
Nominated by: School parent

Position: English and English Literature Teacher • Level taught: Secondary School • School type: Government • Town: Ardross • Category: Secondary • State: WA

For the love of English

As head of the English Department at Applecross Senior High School, Veronica Lake will use almost any means to enervise her students and share her love of English Literature. Veronica weaves elements of pop culture, visits to the theatre, Shakespeare and Japanese literature together to inspire a passion for the English language among her students. She also employs candlelight poetry readings and rap style dramatisations of novels to engage her students in sharing her passion for the language.

In her own time, Veronica coordinates many writing competitions and mentors English teaching colleagues. She produces the school drama productions, as well as editing *Primo Lux* – an anthology of West Australian under 18's poetry, and runs very popular annual literature camps.

Veronica's students have topped the state in English and Literature exams and writing competitions with many going on to achieve PhDs, First Class Honours, and becoming published authors. Other past students have gone on to pursue successful performance careers. Most importantly, they all continue to read and appreciate the richness of the English language.

Insight

Q: *In your opinion what makes a good teacher?*

A: They respect and listen to their students, they love their subject and it shows, they are clear and direct with instructions and have a sense of humour.

Q: *How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?*

A: When a student discovers meaning in a poem, is spellbound by a performance of Shakespeare or shares a book they have read, their energy renews mine.

Q: *In hindsight, what do you wish your training provided you with more of?*

A: I wish there were opportunities to work with experienced mentors where teachers could guide, interact and share ideas in positive and relevant situations.

Q: *What is the most difficult aspect of teaching today?*

A: Paperwork has quadrupled and is dominating my working day. I have less time to be in the classroom with my students.

Q: *What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?*

A: I want to make language and literature alive, relevant and exciting for students. In our technical world, this is difficult.

Q: *How has teaching changed over the years?*

A: The individual student is lost in quotas, reports, the demands of theory and the pressure for good marks. Technology dominates the way things are done.

Q: *What is the single most important thing you, as a teacher, can do to connect with individual students?*

A: Students are unique beings with their own voice. I give them the opportunity to speak. I listen to their voices and value what they say.

Q: *If you were the Minister for Education, Science and Training for a week, what would you try to change?*

A: I would make all class sizes smaller. I would try to lift the social profile, respect and appreciation of teachers in the community.

Q: *What keeps you awake at night?*

A: Incomplete paperwork and time constraints.

Q: *If your students could describe you in three words, what would they say?*

A: Different, eloquent and awesome.

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