

**Imagining the national subject: English and the post-primary school
child in early twentieth-century South Australia**

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Subject English faces continuing challenges to its relevance and even its place in the school system. Of course English is not alone in this process of curriculum justification, review and renovation. Subjects disappear, change names, or change content under the same name as they respond to challenges to their legitimacy and utility. Subjects also move from a central place in the curriculum to dusty corners and vice versa. In many ways subject English is unusual in the way it has maintained its central place in the curriculum over many decades, at least in the secondary school. However, as this book testifies, the traditional role, shape and nature of English as first codified in the Newbolt Report of 1921 in England can no longer be taken for granted. Then, the Newbolt Report placed English as the site where the national culture could be brought to all children through the literature of the ‘mother-tongue’. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the concept of a singular national culture, the role of English as an international language, and the relevance of literature in a multi-mediated world are all subject to critical review, subject English and with it the work of English teachers, is being re-imagined.

This chapter makes the case for bringing an historical sensitivity to this process, even while acknowledging that there are many contemporary sources for such work². The particular value of history for re-imagining the work of the English teacher lies in its usefulness as a reminder of the discourses that have shaped English and which remain central to its logic, and as a resource for disrupting current certainties and assumptions about schooling and school subjects. It begins with a brief exemplar of the way subject English is popularly seen at the present time, and then moves to illustrate how history can help us unsettle our present-day assumptions. The main part of the chapter considers a period in the early twentieth century when the very notion of ‘Australia’ was being shaped in the context of Federation and where post-primary public education was first being established as a site for training the young Australian citizen-in-the-making. This was a period of high anxiety about the older, post-primary school child (a child first labelled an ‘adolescent’ at this time) in relation to the effects that social changes and the development of street and city cultures could have in the new nation. The chapter argues that then, as now, these anxieties were often related to issues of language and literature that were central to the production of school subject English.

Beginning in the present: an editorial on the NSW English examination

There are parallels between this period and the present—particularly around the impact of new technologies of communication and the impact of globalisation of the economy. These are both periods that feature the expression of anxiety about young

¹ Jo-Anne Reid and Bill Green have contributed to the revision and editing of this chapter.

² There is no shortage of ideas for the reform of English such as work that seeks to relate English to new forms of text and text production via multi-literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Nixon, 1997); or to make it a form of cultural study (Morgan, 1993; Morgan, 2000); as well as those who would defend its traditional role as carrier of Western literary canon (Bloom, 1994).

people and their abilities to negotiate a radically changing world of work and leisure. These anxieties are played out in fields related to language, literature and schooling—which are central to the purview of English. The following extract from a recent editorial in an Australian national newspaper is illustrative of the way that English and the study of literature continues to be placed at the centre of anxieties about the place of the young in the world. Attacking the ‘ideologues’ who ‘dreamed up’ a new senior secondary English examination in NSW with ‘baffling questions’ about non-traditional textual forms, such as films and political speeches, requiring new kinds of critical analysis, the Editor wrote:

A bit of intellectual rigour is in order. The study of English lies at the heart of a liberal education. It is central to our understanding of language and our literary heritage. As the core humanities subject, English can help students know themselves, society and history. It can give a young person the communication tools needed to cope in a globalised and technologically advancing world. And it can spark a lifelong adventure with books. Students have their lives, and university courses, to analyse films and websites. Can’t they appreciate a great essay, poem or novel on its own merits, rather than rewrite it for an English exam? (*The Weekend Australian*, March 9-10, 2002, ‘English is more than a power tool’)

This editorial calls for the retention of a traditional form of English in the face of anxieties that are related to the ‘globalising and technologically advancing world’. It is illustrative of the way that anxiety about change can be grounded in the figure of the young and particularly related to issues of English and literacy here represented as a key site for the retention of the (Editor’s?) literary heritage. One interesting feature of this editorial is the way that some aspects of the work of the English teacher, such as ensuring that a student should ‘appreciate a great essay, poem or novel on its own merits’, can be represented as a natural and more innocent practice when compared to the ‘cultural relativism’ and ‘political agenda’ (as they are labelled in another part of the editorial) represented by the new examination. There is a concession that such work might be fine for later—during their ‘lives and university courses’—and an implication that, at school and while still adolescents, their teachers should protect them from such things.

Apart from the obvious nostalgia at the centre of this rendering of (innocent and apolitical) youth as the beginning of ‘a lifelong adventure with books’, there is also an important forgetting at work here. Nearly a century earlier in that same state, there were also educators defending a form of curriculum for providing a ‘liberal education’ to the young in the secondary school. However it was a classical education, involving the study of ancient Greek and Latin, not English, that was being defended against those who were pressing for more ‘modern’ subjects to take their place, or at least be available as an alternative. In the 1904 report of the Knibbs-Turner Commission which recommended changes to education in NSW, considerable space was given to a discussion of the role of the classics in the education of post-primary school children for, at that time, passing an examination in ancient Greek or Latin was a pre-requisite for entry into the University of Sydney. In their report, the commissioners were sharply critical of the ‘classical pedant [who] is apt to assume there is only *one* path to culture’ (p.39 Summarised Report). The merits of study of the literature available in the ‘mother-tongue’ and modern languages such as French and German, along with the study of science, were considered as alternative paths to

‘culture’ and recommended as elements of a liberal education (Cormack, 2002, in draft).

The recommendations and arguments put in the Knibbs-Turner report can be seen as an important moment in the change from a curriculum based on classical education towards one that provided for the teaching of culture in new ways—a process which would eventually, but not inevitably, place English at the centre of a liberal education. A great deal of time and effort was also put into (re)inventing the pedagogies and technologies that would ensure students would ‘appreciate a great essay, poem, or novel on its own merits’ in the English classroom, efforts that seemed as baffling and ideological to classical educators as the recent changes are to the *Weekend Australian* Editor. I make these points, not to attack the Editor as some kind of anti-progressive pedant—his arguments against changes to English do need to be considered—but to point out that the practices being defended and naturalised in the editorial are just as ideological as the practices that are attacked. In fact the Editor’s characterisation of the new forms of English as ‘baffling’ contains elements of what I’d propose an historical imagination may allow. How is it that we can use history to highlight the constructedness of the present; to see taken-for-granted practices as ‘baffling’ or strange, rather than natural and inevitable (Tyler & Johnson, 1991).

English has no natural place ‘at the heart of a liberal education’. Its position at the centre is only relatively recent and arose as the result of a political process of contestation, and yet that can so easily be forgotten. Debates about the reform or retention of certain forms of English are ill-served by arguments that lack an historical imagination and which forget the fragility of the accomplishment that is English. Indeed English itself, in the first decades of the twentieth century, was formed as a response to anxieties about the New that have some interesting parallels with the kinds of anxieties expressed by the editorial writer, and it is to this period I now turn.

Anxieties about young people in the early twentieth century

To examine the anxieties that were expressed about young people in this period I consider the ways that they were written about in South Australia in the *Education Gazette* (hereafter the *Gazette*) published by the Education Department of South Australia³. The *Gazette* was produced monthly and forwarded to every teacher in the state. It contained, among other things, extracts from conference speeches, announcements of regulations, articles, extracts from inspectors’ reports, tips and hints for teachers, official statistics and lists, curriculum statements, and reports of teacher association meetings.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the first state high school was established in Adelaide. It was a period when there was much debate and discussion about what to do about the older child who was now staying on at primary school beyond the Class IV compulsory standard or who was leaving school once they turned 13 to go into work in a changing employment landscape. This was a period immediately following Federation in Australia, when international competition and

³ This analysis is extracted from the work being done as part of PhD research (Cormack, 2002, in draft).

comparison of the English/Australian experience with Germany and other European states, and also the United States, in the fields of commerce, industry and education were common. At this time the centrality of education to national aspirations was a core assumption that was ritualistically deployed in any address to teachers or discourse on the state of education or the nation.

In this context the *Gazette* offered a cornucopia of questions, concerns, hopes, aspirations and fears that were expressed about young people and related to their education. One of the first appearances of the term ‘adolescence’ was in 1908 when it was used twice at the annual conference of the Public School Teachers’ Union where the Director of Education reported on his visit to Europe and North America which focussed in part on post-primary education in those places:

[W]hat strikes one most throughout Europe and America are the many evidences of the realization of the immense significance of the adolescent period in the development of both boy and girl. This stage of human life has of late been studied with more scientific accuracy and more zeal than ever before. Dr Stanley Hall, in his book on “Adolescence, its Psychology and Relation to Crime, Religion, and Education,” says—“Powers and faculties essentially non-existent before are now born, and of the older instincts and impulses some are reinforced and gently developed, while others become subordinate, so that new relations are established and the ego finds a new centre.” (1908 August, EG, p.207)⁴

Hall’s influential text on the scientific study of adolescence had been published in the United States in 1904 .However, adolescence or the adolescent were not the only labels given to young people of this age. Other terms found in the *Gazette* in relation to this older child included:

- older boy/pupil (most years)
- Class IV/V pupil (students aged around 11-13) (most years)
- youth (most years)
- juvenile (1900)
- truants (1900)
- larrikins (1905)
- teens (1906)
- an ‘uncontrollable’ 1906
- street urchins (1908)
- anaemic, nervy, round shouldered girls and boys (1913)
- the boy who ... does not go on to high school (1914)
- hooligan (1914)

Occasionally the period of what would now be called adolescence was characterised:

- a troublesome and dangerous period (1911)
- golden period (1909)
- storm and stress (1910)
- awkward age (1910)

⁴ Primary sources are not included in the reference list. EG stands for the *Education Gazette* published by the Education Department of South Australia.

As can be seen from these lists, the period of adolescence was more frequently marked in the negative than the positive—something noted by Rose (1996) as common in the development of practices that come to shape human subjects. Notions of normality, their accompanying grids of specification and the ‘technologies’ that shape human subjectivity typically have been developed out of a concern with the ‘improper’, the ‘delinquent’, the ‘dis-eased’ (Rose, 1996, p.131) and this is a theme evident in the discussions of the post-primary school child at that time. Among a number of interrelated fields where the adolescent was rendered as a problem or around which anxieties and aspirations were clustered, there are three that speak very clearly of the importance of the work of the English teacher in ensuring that the ‘proper’, healthy and responsible forms of expression were made available to this child. These are: ‘popular culture’, ‘the street’ and ‘the city’

Popular culture

Popular culture represented a site beyond the control of the key institutions of the State—the school, the family, the church and the workplace. The advancements in manufacturing and technology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that made the production of text and image more efficient, meant that entertainment became cheap and widely available:

... with the advent of the cheap music hall and the still cheaper picture-house. the sensation has gone beyond such control; our children and youths have now full licence to receive all the harm that can be got from sitting idly to gaze at dramatic displays. We are compelled to help them to better ways by studying the nature of dramatic impulse, by transferring them, in fact as well as in fancy, from the pit to the stage. Only then can we create within them a force of self-control which will enable them to rise superior to the banalities of cheap sensations. (1914 November, EG, p.320)

Here the pedagogical implication is that students become producers of drama themselves as a means for training self-control—a way for schools to reach into that formerly unsupervised field of the movie house. Of great concern were the texts and magazines that were available through popular culture. Inspector Nicolle, talking to a teachers’ association on the West Coast of the state, predicted that:

The time was coming when the gap between leaving school and finding employment would be bridged. The boys who got on were not those who spent their time devouring flippant literature or learning to smoke the abominable cigarette but those who reserved themselves for the higher destinies of life. (1910 April, EG, p.119)

Such ‘flippant’ literature could be seen as a marker of an illegitimate taste and a danger to the literary sensibilities that were the object of the reading curriculum of the period. In 1907 this extract from the memoirs of John Kerr was presented in the Gazette under the heading, ‘Gleanings:’

Here a protest against certain kinds of reading is not out of place. There are some that are neither morally nor intellectually good. I have a strong conviction that the “penny dreadfuls” and some of even the higher-priced periodicals (containing little else than sensational and impossible adventures) which are issued weekly or monthly from the press, can scarcely fail to create an appetite for exciting and highly-spiced reading to which literature of a higher, more useful, and, except to a diseased taste, intrinsically more interesting kind will appeal in vain. The boy or girl who between the ages of sixteen and twenty has gone through a course of this sensational rubbish, will be with difficulty brought back to a state of mind which can enjoy the beauty, pathos, and

truthfulness of such writers as Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens. The result must be a waste of valuable time and a debauching of literary taste. (1907 July, EG, p. 168)

Here we see the connection between concerns about young people and the English subjects that can be related to the connections between adolescents, schooling and literacy noted in the introduction to this chapter. At this time the term ‘literacy’ was not in common use. It first appears in 1904, and in the core data is found only four times—each time in the negative—as ‘illiteracy’. Interestingly, in that first use, illiteracy is tied to the innovations of the ‘New Education’ arising from the pedagogical philosophies of Herbart, Pestalozzi, Froebel—German educators. Writing back to his Director of Education of his experiences of education in the United States, a Victorian teacher noted that ‘[i]lliteracy has sprung up like a crop of weeds in the soil so richly fertilized by German ideas’ (1904 June, EG, p.83)⁵.

As the quotation from Kerr’s memoirs typifies, what might today be called issues around literacy were more likely in the early twentieth century to be discussed in relation to the English subjects: ‘reading’, ‘writing’, ‘spelling’, ‘grammar’ and so on—and in relation to literary knowledge and sensibilities (Cormack, 2001a, 2001b; Green & Beavis, 1996). The discussions of these matters in the *Gazette* show that work around the English subjects was seen as central to the mission of the public school and a prime means of shaping the citizen in the making. It was unsurprising then, that issues related to the English subjects were connected to discussions of the older child and that the kinds of texts that young people were reading (and viewing) were the object of concern.

These were not the only concerns, however. Other sites of popular culture were also mentioned. In 1927, a school inspector was to cite the movies and ‘sea-beaches’ as problem sites, especially given the ‘want’ of parental control. The lack of control, care or concern of certain parents was frequently deployed in justifications for curriculum innovations or pedagogical practices—clearly even the site of the family could not be trusted to provide the appropriate moral training to deal with the challenge of the popular. Similarly sport could be seen as a problem and as evidence of a lack of spiritual interest in the community. This was noted in a speech to the Public Teachers’ Union by J. A. Schulz, Principal of Adelaide University Training College:

Such critics tell us that our schools do not appear to be very successful in developing enduring interests. They point to the thousands of youths lounging about street corners whose souls respond to no higher interests than those relating to the latest sporting events. And the critics lead us yet further and point out to us the shallowness and fewness of higher spiritual interests of so many people in all classes of the community. (1911 August, EG, p.198)

⁵ The section in the *Gazette* was called, ‘A Victorian on Education in the United States’ and was introduced in this way. ‘The following is an extract from a letter to the Director of Education from Mr. W.J. Hughston, B.A., Stanford University, California. Mr Hughston is a Victorian teacher who is studying Education in the United States. In view of the changes introduced by the new programme [this is a reference to the recently revamped Course of Instruction for Primary Schools in South Australia], his remarks upon the danger of producing loose and slipshod work by an unintelligent use of attractive methods and a complete abandonment of drill and memory work should be found interesting’. (1904, June EG, p.83) It seems, that from the very earliest days of state schooling, a linkage was made between progressivist pedagogies and illiteracy and lack of rigour.

The street

Schulz' speech above usefully illustrates the way that popular culture as a field beyond the control of the State and church was tied to the site of the 'street'. The street was the site most frequently mentioned as a problem in relation to the adolescent. For example, it was mentioned four times in 1901—in an inspector's report, the report to the Minister of Education by the Board of Education, and in two speeches to teachers at the annual conference of the Public Teachers' Union⁶.

Inspector Smyth, in his annual report for 1900, noted the fine work of the Port Adelaide Institute to 'foster a taste for reading and literature among the senior pupils of our schools' (1901 March, EG, p.53). He went on to urge the extension of such work to 'large centres' and that it should include young people no longer attending school. He claims:

In addition to being instrumental in giving a healthy stimulus for occupying and improving the mind, it would help to mitigate the tendency of aimlessly strolling up and down the streets after dark, which now, unfortunately, is far too prevalent. (1901 March, EG, p.53)

The street signified a space beyond the reach of the state and represented the breakdown of the ability or willingness of the family to properly supervise the older boy (the gendered form is deliberate here). The place of the girl is assumed to be in the home—and it is in her, properly trained in keeping house, that a remedy may be found in running a home from which the young would not wish to escape to the amusements of the street (Board of Inspectors, 1901 October, EG, p.122). In the early 1900s, when there was so much discussion about the need for schooling beyond the age of compulsion (students could leave when they were 13, or before if they passed the compulsory standard), the street came to be seen as a kind of no-man's-land for young boys between the school and the decaying influence of the family. Inspector Smyth, lamenting the 'elasticity' of the conditions of compulsory schooling in South Australia (students only had to attend school a minimum of 35 days each quarter), put these together:

The following are some of the evils which the present condition of things engenders :-
Laxity of parental control; lack of reverence and obedience on the part of the children ;
want of interest by the parents in the future well-being of their offspring ; aimless
wandering about the streets by children after reaching of 13, or even still younger by
those who have passed the simple requirements of the compulsory standard. (1904
September, EG, p.137)

It was in relation to the street that the term 'illiteracy' was employed in 1907 (August EG, p.182) by the Director of Education who reported the 'fear that we have in our midst numbers of children, who are growing up wholly illiterate, untrained and uncontrollable'. Literateness — or more commonly, literary taste — was often used as a marker of proper citizenship for the adolescent. This was something that the school could supply and that the street, through its cheap pleasures, would allow to 'waste' away, the longer the child was away from the elevating influence of the school. Thus the street operated as an empty signifier onto which many kinds of moral debasement could be written and which subsequently could be used to argue for the

⁶ In a possible illustration of the way in which ideas and discourses circulate, one of those speeches was by the Minister of Education.

extension of the age of compulsion, both for the boys who might inhabit the streets and for the girls who might keep them away. Inspector McBride illustrates the line of the argument so frequently used:

I hold strongly that a child should not be permitted to leave school before he is 14 years of age. Between 14 and 18 his character is being formed; therefore every possible means should be taken by the State to give him a chance to become a good patriot and a useful, self-respecting citizen. He should be required to join the cadet corps, to attend continuation classes and lectures, to cultivate music or some other art, to become a member of a literary society. I am sure that if these things had been done in the past we should not have to deplore the inordinate love for pleasure, drunkenness, betting, street-walking, &c. to which far too many of our young men are addicted. Something should also be done for the girls. The future of our Australian nation depends very largely on the education which they receive after leaving the elementary school. (1910 June, EG, p.151)

This argument was also extended to the notion that schools should develop in young people ‘enduring interests’ which would act as a kind of moral prophylactic against the streets and popular culture—this would become an argument for the promotion of English, and reading of certain kinds of literature in particular, as a means to this end (Cormack, 2001b).

The city

Another site of concern around adolescents was the ‘city’. In some cases these concerns connected with those already discussed in relation to the ‘street’. The city could be presented, for example, and borrowing from British work on child rescue and the problems of overcrowded industrial urban environments, as a risk to the health and well-being of the young. An article entitled ‘Growth and development of the child’ by Dr. R.S. Rogers was reproduced in the September 1907 Gazette and contained a long description of the deterioration of the British nation through the effects of urban living. Not only did the poor conditions of the city lead to ill-health, it lead to the flight of the more ‘reputable’ classes with a consequent moral vacuum:

The natural corollary to such conditions, the more reputable class of citizens endeavour to live out of town, thus removing their beneficial influence and example from the ignorant portion of the population, who regard with a lenient eye the vices of themselves and their neighbours. Under these circumstances drink and other vicious habits, on the part of the parents as well as the undeveloped youth contribute in no small measure to the stunted growth of the city-bred. (1907 September, EG, p.209)

In addition, the city contained the lures of the street. The Governor of South Australia noted in his speech to teachers in 1912 (August, EG, p.187) that money, which employment at the age of 13 year could provide, acted as a ‘baited trap’ for the moral, intellectual and physical well-being of the young who might seek to spend that money on the street.

More often, however, the concern about the city in the *Gazette* was related to the future of the nation, including the need to populate the uninhabited centre of the continent and the need to maintain a healthy rural economy. The question was, how could young people be kept in rural areas or encouraged to go there to live and work?

A problem which was causing a great deal of anxious thought among Australian statesmen to-day was that of populating the empty spaces of our nation. If in their

schools they instilled into the boys a love of their environment; if they pointed out to them the nobility of the life of a farmer, they would have done their share towards the solving of the problem. p.263

Literacy (as both a literary sensibility and as reading and writing) could be both a problem and a solution in relation to this concern. As a problem it could be over-emphasised in schools to the detriment of manual training (drawing, observation, manual work), leading boys away from a desire to work on the land (President of the Public Teachers' Union, 1913 July, EG, p.309). However, it could also be a solution—instilling that sense of adventure and daring required to inspire the young to go out into the harsh hinterland:

Our race has been pre-eminently an adventurous one, and the Australian branch of such a race should be a daring one. The early settlement of this continent, the wild days of the gold diggings, were undertaken by people who were not afraid to leave a settled land and wrestle with the problems of a new country. We must keep in mind that much of Australia is virtually unknown, and that on that area there must be mineral and other wealth which needs the daring spirit of the past to develop. Is it not the tendency to-day for the people to live the more comfortable and less adventurous life of the large cities on the sea-board? Will not the reading of such books tend to revive the old spirit of our fathers? Will not such literature fire the youthful mind to leave the enervating life of the crowded city and face the strenuous life of the undeveloped interior? This, then, educationally speaking, is the reason why the reading of books of adventure should be encouraged. (1907 March, EG, p.79)⁷

There is an indication here that the English subjects could be deployed in relation to almost any 'problem' facing the policy-maker in this era—this speaks, perhaps, to a faith in the English subjects, and in literature in particular, to do important moral work on the young. It also speaks to the 'generosity' of the subjects and their apparent flexibility to be bent to new needs and aspirations as they appeared⁸. In the case of popular culture, the street and the problems of the city, English could thus be seen as an important means of preparing the young and of arming them with the habits and stances to life necessary for the advancement of the young nation.

English teaching historically as work towards the formation of adolescence

Concerns about popular culture, youth on the street and at large in the city, run across the data on adolescence in the *Gazette*. They were significant justifications for calls to action in relation to young people—creating a space into which different solutions could be brought and where different aspirations could be applied.

It is not surprising, given the source of the data, that these solutions and aspirations were connected with education and schooling. Who were the *authorities* that, through the *Gazette*, could render aspects of the life of young people problematic and proclaim the ideals and strategies to address these problems? These authorities were overwhelmingly officials of the State in the form of the Director of Education, his Inspectors and related professionals such as Principals of teacher training colleges and university educators. Their political masters—politicians and governors—tended to

⁷ A paper read by Mr. B.S. Roach before Section J (Mental Science and Education) of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, January 10th, 1907

⁸ This notion of generosity is borrowed from Rose (1999) who uses it in relation to the so-called 'psy' disciplines.

reflect the concerns and ideals put forward by their officials. Indeed, many speeches by such figures were begun with statements of deferral to such ‘experts’ in education. Occasionally, the words of medical experts and religious leaders were evident in the material but these comments tended to be confined to their ‘specialisations’. Occasionally the voices of others, such as employers and the public were deployed by these commentators, but did not speak directly to teachers through the pages of the *Gazette*.

Popular culture, the street and the city, were sites where the institutions of the state and the church were seen to have limited control, and can be seen as linked in some important ways to *strategies* for the regulation of the population. They were connected sites that could represent danger, temptation and risk to health and moral well-being. The dangers of these sites were used as the basis of an argument for extending schooling beyond the age of 13 and to reform schooling so that it better trained students, practically and morally, to resist their allure. The threat of popular culture, the street and the city could become the basis of strategies of social regulation through the extension of schooling to a new segment of the population.

However this was not just a case of regulatory detention. Schooling could also be called upon to offer ideals, exemplars and aims for the young people who would stay longer at school—*teleologies* that included the adventure of the country on the one hand, and the pride of Britishness on the other. Similarly the involvement of schooling in training the young for skilled jobs in secondary and primary industries for boys and in the home for girls, was offered as the best hope for a happier and more uplifting life for young people, a better trained worker for employers, and a disciplined citizenry.

To deliver on this promise, schooling had to train young people to manage the freedom that would come with work and a wage and contact with the street and city. There seemed to be a constant struggle with how best to provide freedom for students in school, while maintaining appropriate supervision and control. The old technologies of schooling—a drill-and-memory based curriculum, with a military style discipline—could not, it seems, provide the kind of freedom and training in self-discipline required.

From this perspective the New Education movement, and the English subjects that played an important part in it, can be seen as a period of experimentation in *human technologies* that might provide such forms of training. It should be noted, however, that English is not the only subject-area that is interesting in this regard. In the *Gazette*, a great deal of space was given to other subjects which would take on the challenge of the ‘principle of the freedom of the child’ and the production of the citizen-in-the-making—including drawing, nature study, and physical training.

A challenge for curriculum historical research is to think about how school subjects such as English may have been linked to wider discourses and the problematisations that constitute adolescence. This chapter has provided an account of three ‘teaching problems’ that were related to adolescence in the first decades of the twentieth century, and provides some useful starting points in that process especially in identifying the management of freedom as a key challenge for the education of

adolescents at that time within subject English. This account is useful as a reminder of the discourses that have shaped English and which remain central to its logic, even today. When we consider the nature of the adolescent human subject assumed by the Editor with whose words this chapter began, the particular value of history for re-imagining the work of the English teacher becomes apparent. Concerns about ways that young people will cope with the temptations of popular culture, the street and the city may have been replaced in recent times by technology, the web and globalisation, yet the importance of English teachers in ensuring that students are free to meet these challenges with a certain kind of ‘intellectual rigour’ and an appreciation of their literary heritage remains constant. In this way, an historical reflection can function as a resource for disrupting our current certainties and assumptions about schooling and school subjects. It is suggestive of a number of considerations to take to the further historical study of school-subjects, such as:

- how freedom is deployed in their rationale
- the practices and techniques that are used to incite, supervise and correct freedom
- the subject positions made available to young people in the name of freedom
- the consequent role(s) of the teacher.

Such analysis may help answer the question of how teachers of school-subjects such as English and literacy can ensure that adolescents are given ‘the liberty to do as they ought’.

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