

## Area of Study

### **Top up English , Creativity and Communications**

#### Overview

This transition unit develops students' communications skills. Students also develop self confidence as they become informed on issues and are then more confident in voicing their opinions. Students step out of their comfort zone as they make oral presentations to the class. They enjoy bringing language to life by making presentations in front of their peers. This TU also give students a great sense of personal achievement as they fulfil the personal goal of speaking with confidence in front of an audience.

#### Related learning

This TU links with Leaving Certificate English, while building on the skills of Junior Certificate English. It also links with Careers through a Career Investigation. There is a further link with SPHE, as students develop self-esteem and self-confidence. It also links with I.C.T as they will use computers to research and present their project.

#### Outline of the unit

The transition unit has four sections which can be taught in any order.

##### **Section 1: Current Affairs**

Teachers might introduce the unit by bringing a range of magazine and newspaper articles into class on topical issues. Topics could include: eating disorders, drug misuse, football hooliganism (or whatever might be of interest to your students). Students are encouraged to look at how the same issue might be presented from different perspectives in different articles. They are also invited to watch out for interesting and provocative articles that they can bring into class to share with each other. Having discussed a broad range of issues, the students are then asked to pick a social issue that is of interest or concern to them. They must then research the issue (either alone, in pairs or in groups of three). Students must set out a synopsis of the current situation and some possible solution(s). This must be presented both visually and orally. Their visual presentation may be displayed in a folder (with photos/diagrams, etc) or on a poster or it can be presented using PowerPoint. They must also present orally to the class. Each student is given 3-4 minutes to present their topic after which there is an open forum when students can ask questions of the speaker or contribute their ideas on the topic.

This part of the TU lends itself well to peer assessment. The students can use a checklist to assess each oral presentation and then use these to offer constructive feedback to each 'performer'. (See appendix 1)

## Section 2: Communication Skills with a Career Focus

In this part of the unit students assess their aptitude and suitability for a chosen career. It is important to link in with the Guidance teacher when teaching this part of the unit.

Students research their chosen career under the following headings:

1. Career and course study details
2. Job opportunities at home and abroad
3. Why he/she wishes to follow this course of study including work experience completed in this area.
4. A brief summary outlining his/her aptitude and suitability for the course and also outlining the importance of communication skills and other interpersonal skills in this job.

When they have completed their research, the students summarise their points onto flashcards and make a short presentation to the class. Students will identify a skill that they would like to develop in section 3 and 4.

## Section 3: A Chosen Text

A novel or text will be selected for study which is rich in dialogue and will therefore lend itself to performance. It is important that it is also contentious and will generate good discussion, debate and interest amongst the students. As the novel or text will be read in class it is also important that the text selected is not too long. See suggestions under Resources.

In reading the novel or text students will learn how to discuss characterisation, themes, etc. They will then select a section which they will practice and perform for the class. (The teacher may help select a piece suitable to the student's personality).

When preparing to dramatise the text they will learn some of the theory of language and communication. For example, why do we pause? How do we know when to pause? What do we do in the pause? How can facial expression add to verbal communication?

A video or DVD recording of famous speeches from history or famous speeches from films, for example, William Wallace's Speech in the film Braveheart, Aragorn's speech in to battle in Lord of the Rings or Henry V's speech before going in to battle from Henry V. Teachers can also tape from TV (e.g. Dáil Debates) or record radio plays or novels. See Resources for further ideas for speeches.

## Section 4: Assessment

The most appropriate mode of assessment is an interview as this gives the students an opportunity to demonstrate the communication skills that they have gained. Students are assigned a 10 minutes interview slot at which they will be asked

1. About what they have learned  
They will make an oral presentation of work completed in Section 1, 2 and 3.
2. About themselves – skills, weaknesses, personality, ambitions, greatest achievements, where you see yourself in 5 years time.

Teachers can conduct the assessment within the school day and may decide to invite an English teacher other than the transition unit teacher to assist with the interviews.

## Breakdown of the unit

Class contact time - one double class for the academic year approx. 45 hours. Alternatively, this TU could be timetabled for ½ the year for 4 classes per week.

## Aims

*This transition unit aims to*

- equip students with the necessary skills to become effective and confident communicators
- develop students' self-confidence and self-esteem.

## Learning Outcomes

*On completion of this unit students should be able to:*

- confidently demonstrate the skills of effective communication
- make an oral presentation to their peers
- demonstrate an informed understanding of current affairs through critical engagement with various media forms, for example magazines, newspapers, the internet
- discuss and evaluate characters and themes of the novel
- dramatise a selected piece from the chosen novel
- combine their research on careers in this unit with their work experience module to make more informed decisions about a career they may wish to pursue
- demonstrate good interview skills through the final assessment.music within Ireland's broader cultural context
- relate the history and workings of the Irish film industry and how films are made here
- recognise key personnel from the Irish film industry, what they do and what their contribution has been
- be familiar with the range of film courses available and employment potential within the industry
- organise a film event in conjunction with IFI, local cinema or arts centre
- research, complete and present a project.

## Key skills

## How evidenced

information processing	Students will learn how to collect and collate information from many sources. They will learn to edit information and present it. They will also learn the skill of discerning reliable sources.
critical and creative thinking	Students will discuss topical social issues and have opportunities to challenge their attitudes on these issues. They will examine social issues from various points of view and see how different and sometimes conflicting perspectives can be found on a given topic.
communicating	Students will learn to evaluate the various modes of communication including: oral, facial and gesture. They will become more aware of the characteristics of effective communication. Also, students will become more skilled in the art of both speaking and listening.
working with others	Students will work in groups of 2/3 in presenting their social issue topic. While working in groups they will learn to value the following team membership, communication and organisation skills.
being personally effective	Students will learn the value of: setting deadlines, targeting, self-reflection, feedback, self-confidence and self-esteem. Students will acquire the skills of organisation as they prepare for their different presentations. They will also learn how to give constructive feedback to each other.

## Learning approaches

- active learning in the research and group work on a social issue project in particular
- group discussion: students will learn how to contribute their ideas to the group/class and the importance of supporting their opinion
- teacher-led instruction as needed.

## Assessment approaches

- active learning in the research and group work on a social issue project in particular
- group discussion: students will learn how to contribute their ideas to the group/class and the importance of supporting their opinion
- teacher-led instruction as needed.

## Evaluation methods

It is important to assess whether or not the aims have been achieved. Both continuous assessment and the interview will ascertain whether or not the course aims have been achieved. At the end of the unit the students will also be asked to evaluate what they found most useful and what might be changed when teaching this unit again to another group.

## Resources

This transition unit is based on resources developed by the Irish Board of Speech and Drama ([www.irishboard.ie](http://www.irishboard.ie)).

Other resources might include:

National and international newspapers and magazines

Careers department material

Language Now by Kate O'Carroll

Kevin Kelly 'Looking ahead and living now' programme of personal development

Possible texts for Section 3:

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

Reading in the Dark by Seamus Deane

Lies of Silence by Brian Dillon

How Many Miles to Babylon by Jennifer Johnson

My Left Foot directed by Jim Sheridan

Billy Elliot directed by Stephen Daldry

Monologues for Young Actors by Lorraine Cohen ([Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk))

Monologues for Girls by Susan Pomerance

Monologues for Teenagers by Roger Krasher

Audition Speeches for 6-16 year olds by Jean Marlow

100 Monologues edited by Laura Harrington

Shakescenes- Shakespeare scenes for Two edited by John Russell Brown

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time by Mark Haddon

Looking Ahead and Living Now by Kevin Kelly

Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul by Jack Canfield

[www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com) for copies of speeches from movies

[www.unison.ie](http://www.unison.ie) for newspapers

[www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie) - Irish resource portal

[www.teachit.co.uk](http://www.teachit.co.uk) for high quality resources and ideas for teaching communication skills

[www.filmeducation.org.uk](http://www.filmeducation.org.uk) for film/speeches in movies

[www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv) for video demonstration of a variety of communication methodologies

[www.toastmasters.ie](http://www.toastmasters.ie) for tips for Public Speaking