

Text Selection in the Senior English Curriculum

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VCE English/EAL Text List 2015

The following texts proposed by the English/EAL Text Advisory Panel have been approved by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) as suitable for study in Units 3 and 4 in 2015. Texts were selected in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines.

Criteria for text selection

Each text selected for the VCE English/EAL text list will:

- have literary merit and be worthy of close study
- be an excellent example of form and genre
- sustain intensive study, raising interesting issues and providing challenging ideas
- be appropriate for both male and female students
- be appropriate for the age and development of students and, in that context, reflect current community standards and expectations.

The text list as a whole will:

- be suitable for a wide range of students, including students studying English as an additional language
- reflect the cultural diversity of the Victorian community
- include a balance of new and established works
- include texts that display affirming perspectives
- include texts by or about Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- reflect engagement with Asia.

Guidelines for text list

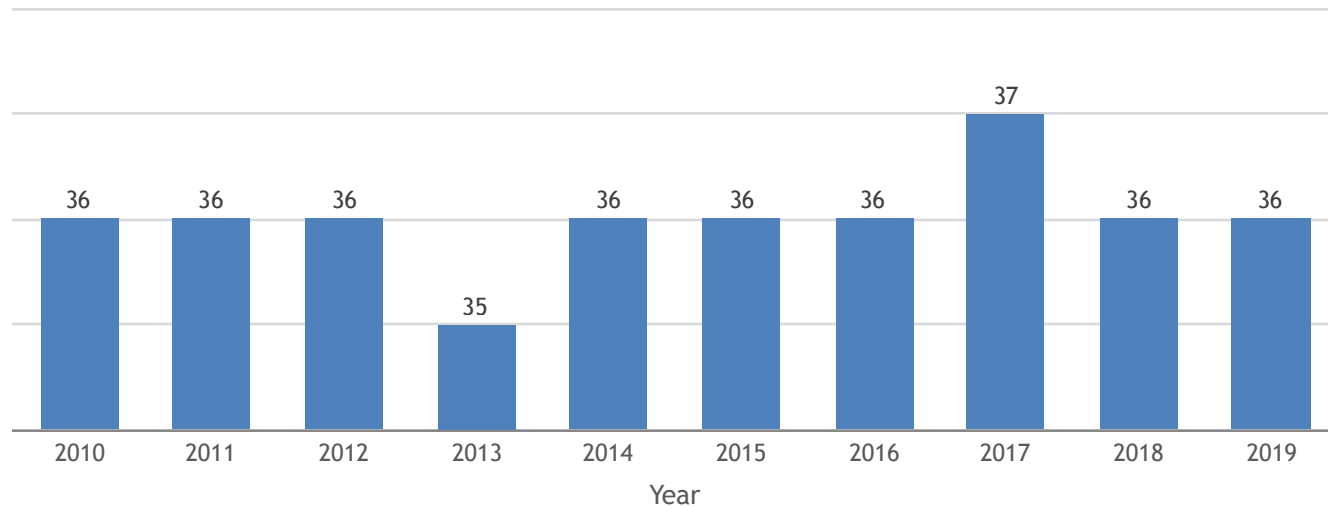
The text list for VCE English/EAL must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Contain a total of 35 available texts
 - a. 20 for List 1: Area of Study 1
 - b. 16 for List 2: Area of Study 2 (four for each Context)
 - i. The imaginative landscape
 - ii. Whose reality?
 - iii. Encountering conflict
 - iv. Exploring issues of identity and belonging
2. Represent the full range of texts indicated in the study design in the following approximate proportions:
 - a. Area of Study 1: List 1 (20 texts)
 - i. eight novels
 - ii. two collections of short stories
 - iii. two collections of poetry or songs
 - iv. three plays
 - v. three multimodal texts
 - vi. two non-fiction texts

Multimodal texts are defined as combining two or more communication modes, for example, print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations.

- VCE English as Senior English Curriculum for majority of students
- Text lists represent compulsory lists since 1990, limiting what can be studied in the final years of schooling
- Text selection processes are dictated by government guidelines (law).

Number of texts per year



- “Struggles for recognition are a fundamental dimension of social life and that what is at stake in them is the accumulation of a particular form of capital.” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.22)
- “The specialized knowledge demands and more generic cultural demands laid up in study designs, syllabuses, examination papers, school tests and examiners’ reports are indeed socially discriminating.” (Teese, 2008, pg.12)
- “The history and competing interest and values of modern society are expressed in the school curriculum” (Young, 1998, pg.9)
- “...the best which has been thought and said” (Arnold, 1869, p. 6).

1. What are the trends in VCE English text selection lists (2010-2019)?
2. Which texts are selected by schools for study in the Senior English Curriculum?
3. What informs text-selection decisions made by teachers in the Senior English Curriculum?

- VCE English texts lists from 2010-2019 collated.
- Approximately 35 texts per year, about 350 texts across 10 years.
- A framework is developed
- Coding team formed
- Every text was double-coded, with the assistance of coding guidelines.
- Discrepancies were resolved by lead investigators
- Statistical trends are generated.

The Coding Frame

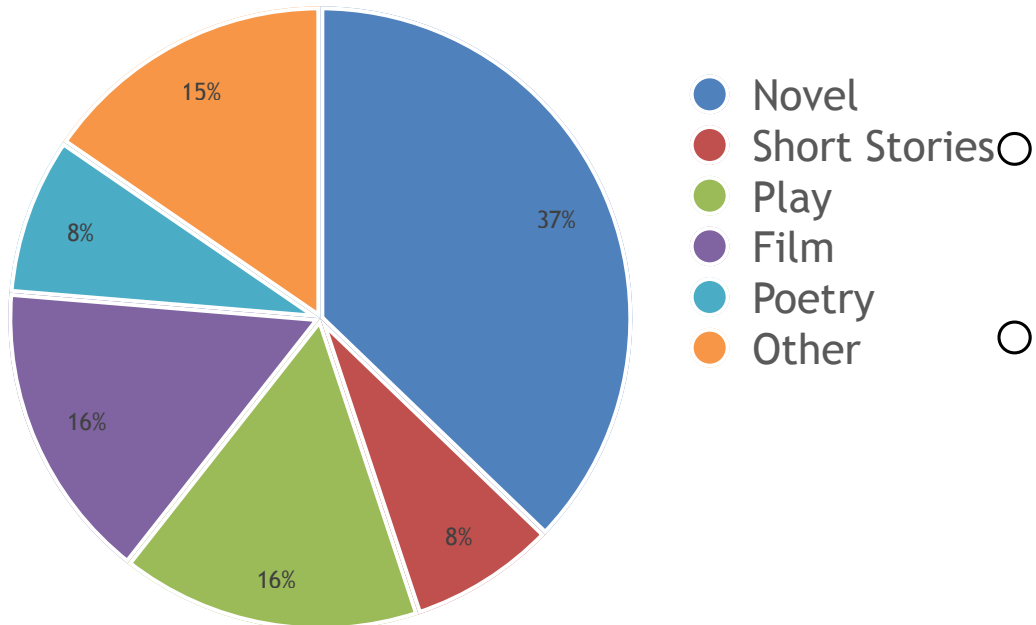
The Coding Frame

Year of publication	Author sex	Fiction/ non-fiction	Story Setting - continent	Story setting - urban/ rural	Story setting - time	Text type	Protagonist Sex, age, gender.	Antagonist sex, gender	Indigeneity	Presence of minority groups	Themes explored
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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	
1																								
2					Author Sex			Story		Setting						Setting		Text Type (Select only one)						
3				Year of first publication	Male	Female	Other	Fiction	Non-fiction	Australia (inc NZ & Oceania)	Asia	Europe	Africa	North America	South America	Urban/suburban	Rural	Novel	Short Stories	Play	Film	Poetry	Other	
4	Text List Year	Title	Author																					
136	2011	the story of a road	Michael Me	2004	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
137	2010	the story of a road	Michael Me	2004	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
138	2013	Death of a Salesman	Miller Arth	1949	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
139	2018	The Crucible	Miller Arth	1953	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
140	2017	The Crucible	Miller Arth	1953	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
141	2018	Death of a Salesman	Miller Arth	1949	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
142	2015	Death of a Salesman	Miller Arth	1949	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
143	2014	Death of a Salesman	Miller Arth	1949	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
144	2012	The Crucible	Miller Arth	1953	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
145	2011	The Crucible	Miller Arth	1953	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	

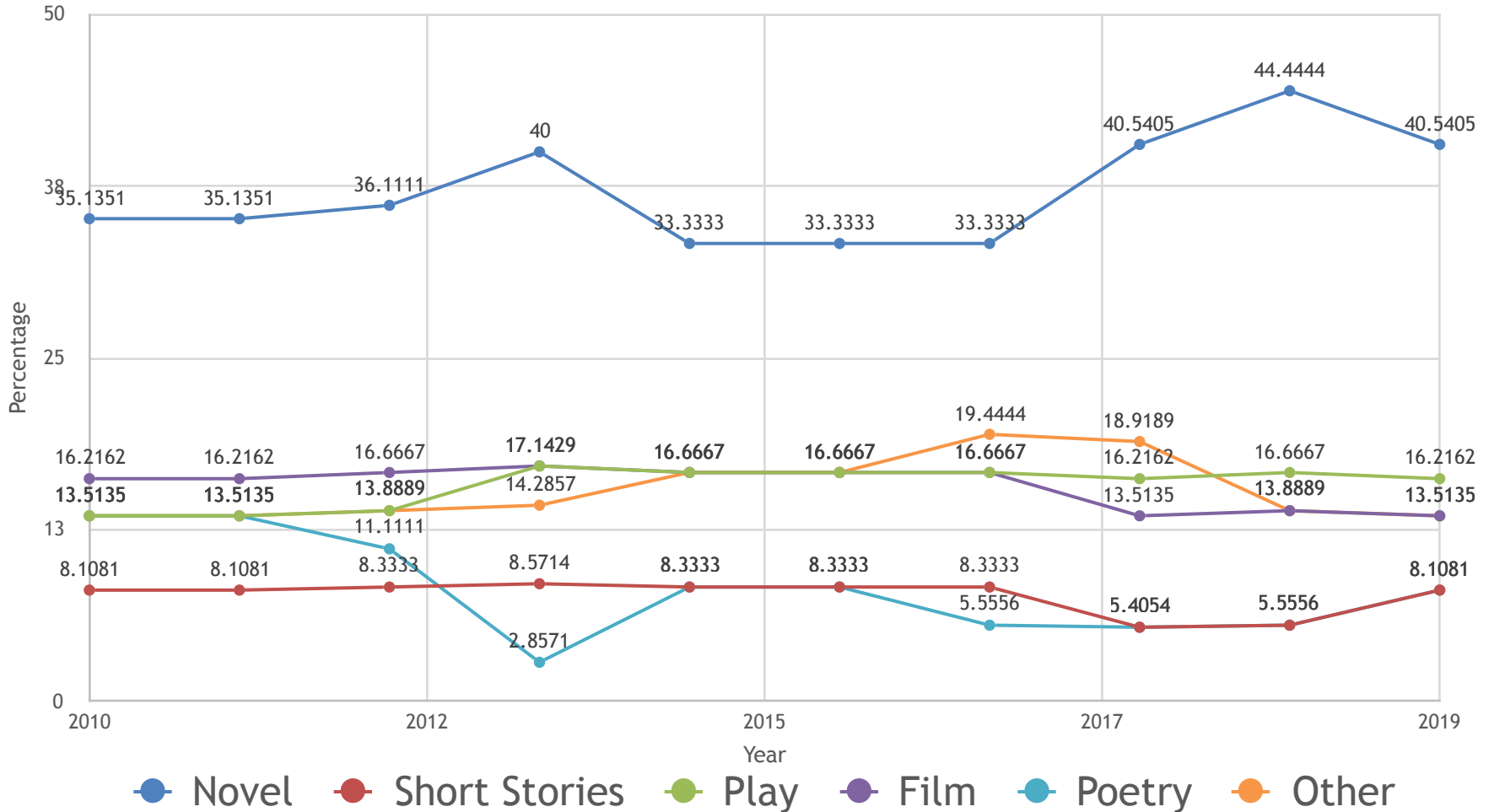
Findings - Text type

Text-type (%)



- Novels are the most prevalent text
- Film and plays receive the next most attention
- Less than 10% of texts were classed as poetry
- The 'Other' category is made up almost exclusively of memoirs, and 1 graphic novel

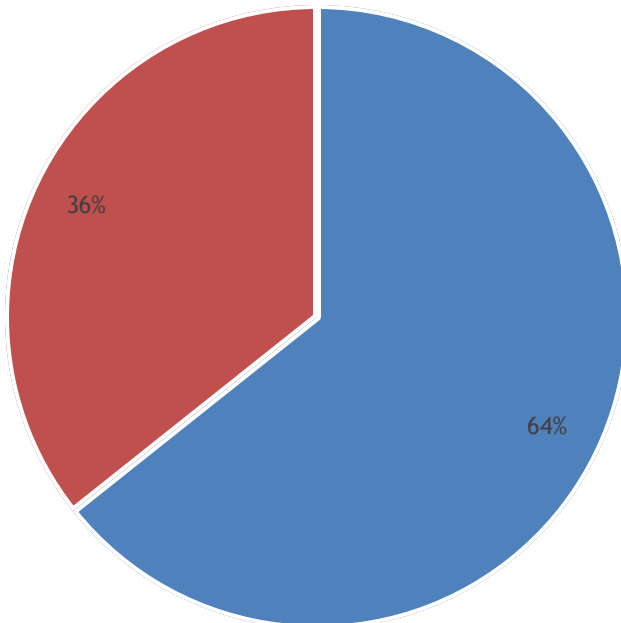
Text-types (%) over time



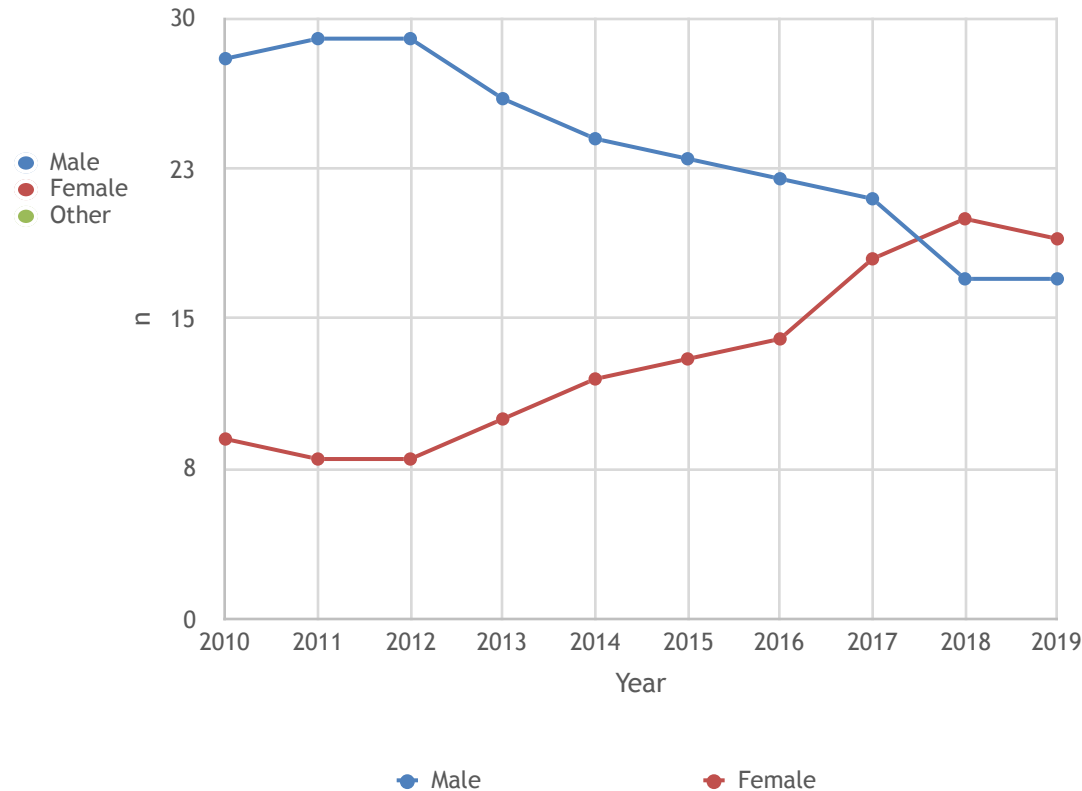
Findings - Author Sex

- Almost two thirds of texts were authored or directed by males.
- Between 2010-2012, almost 8 in 10 texts were authored by males.
- The gap over the past 10 years has closed and there is now parity between the sexes

Author Sex

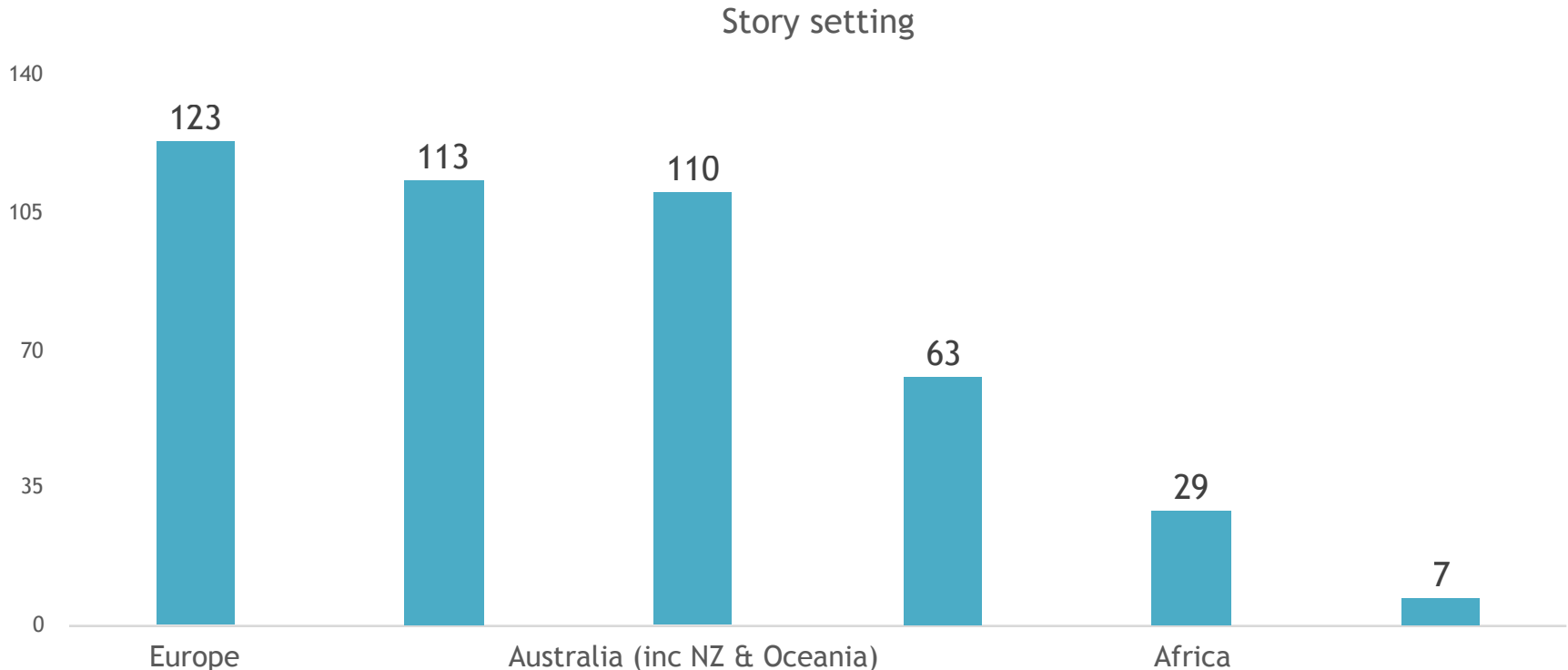


Author Sex



Findings - Story setting

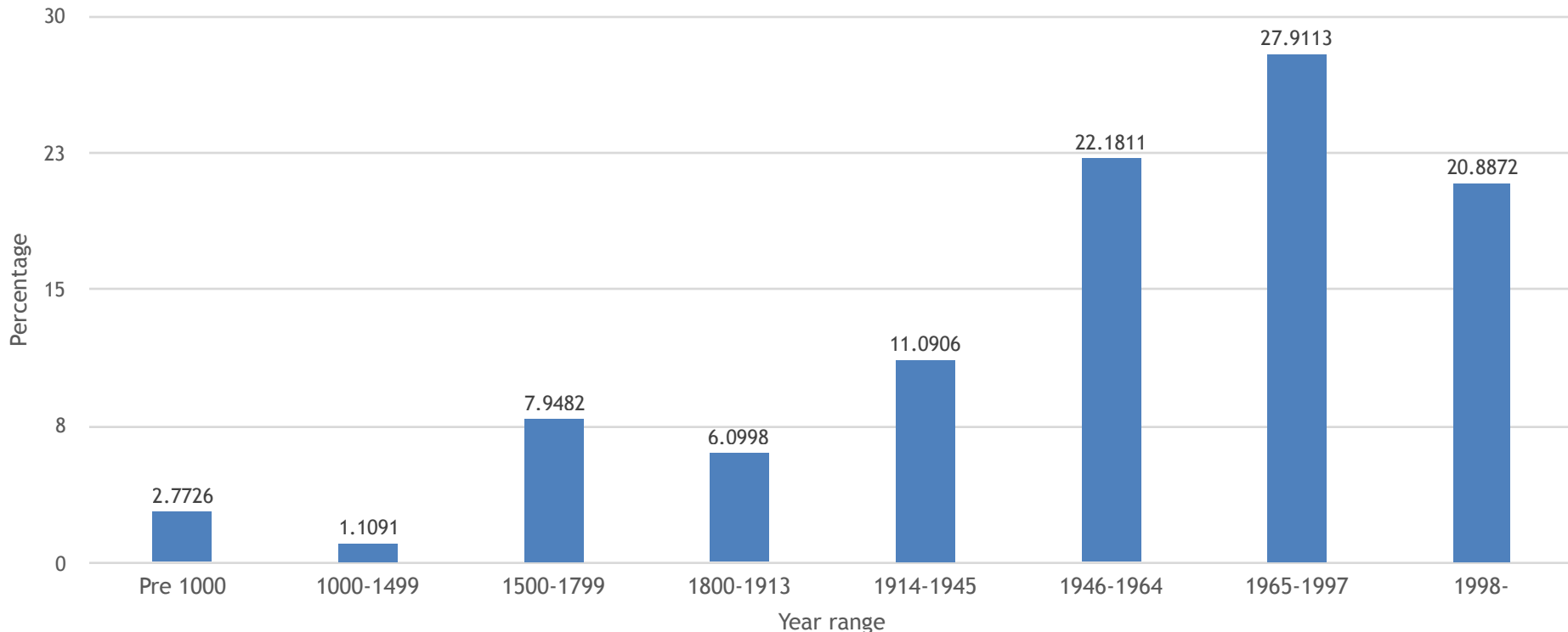
- The vast majority of the texts set in Europe were located in the British Isles.
- Less than one third of texts were set in Australia
- Only 17% of texts were set in Asia.
- Of the texts set in Australia, 54% of these were of female authors/directors.



Findings - Story setting

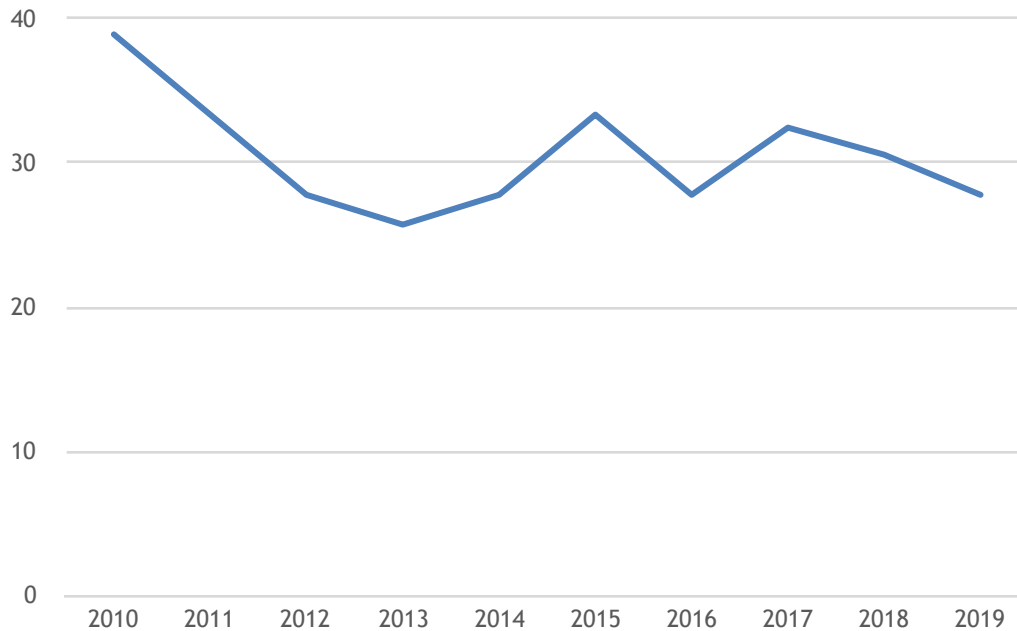
- Almost 50% of texts are located in a post-1965 world.
- One fifth of texts are situated in the same time period as that of our students
- Less than 18% of texts are from the 19th Century and earlier

Story setting time - percentages for each time period



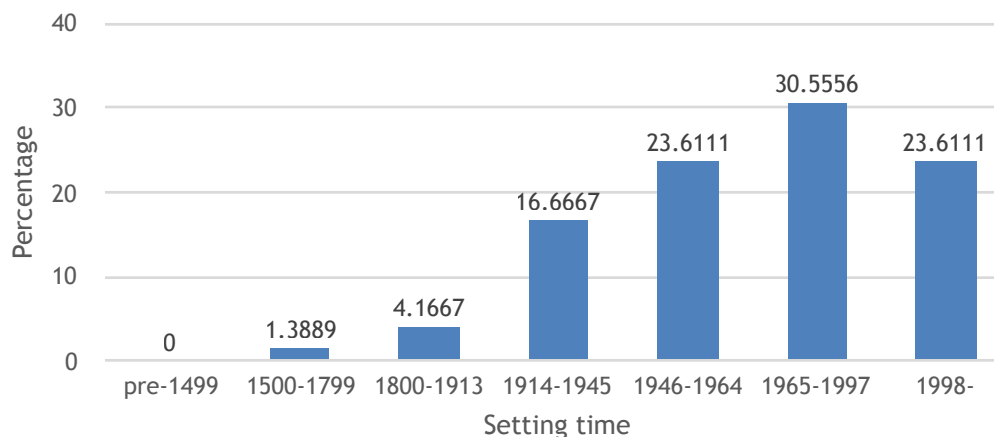
Findings - 'Australian' texts

% of Texts Set in Australia



- While about one-third of texts are set in Australia, there is a small, but downward, trend in this area.

Australia - Story setting Time

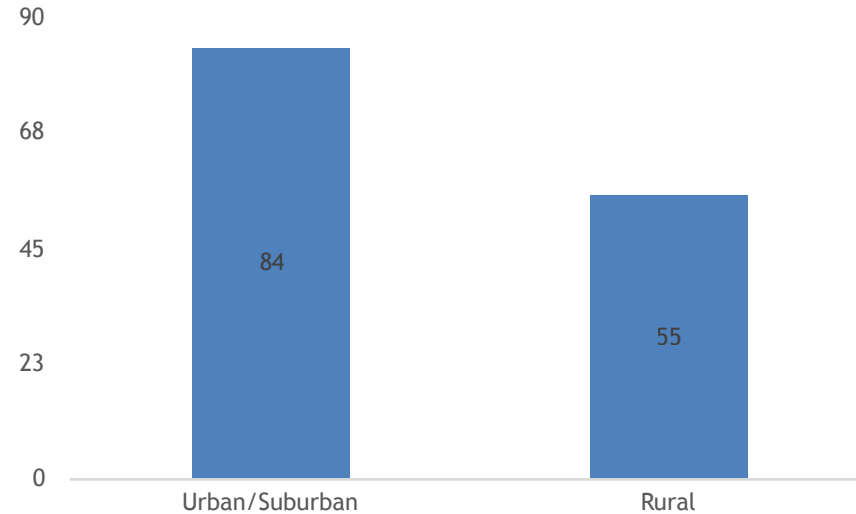


- Texts set in Australia are distributed similar to all texts from the lists.
- Almost 80% of texts are set in a post-WW2 era.

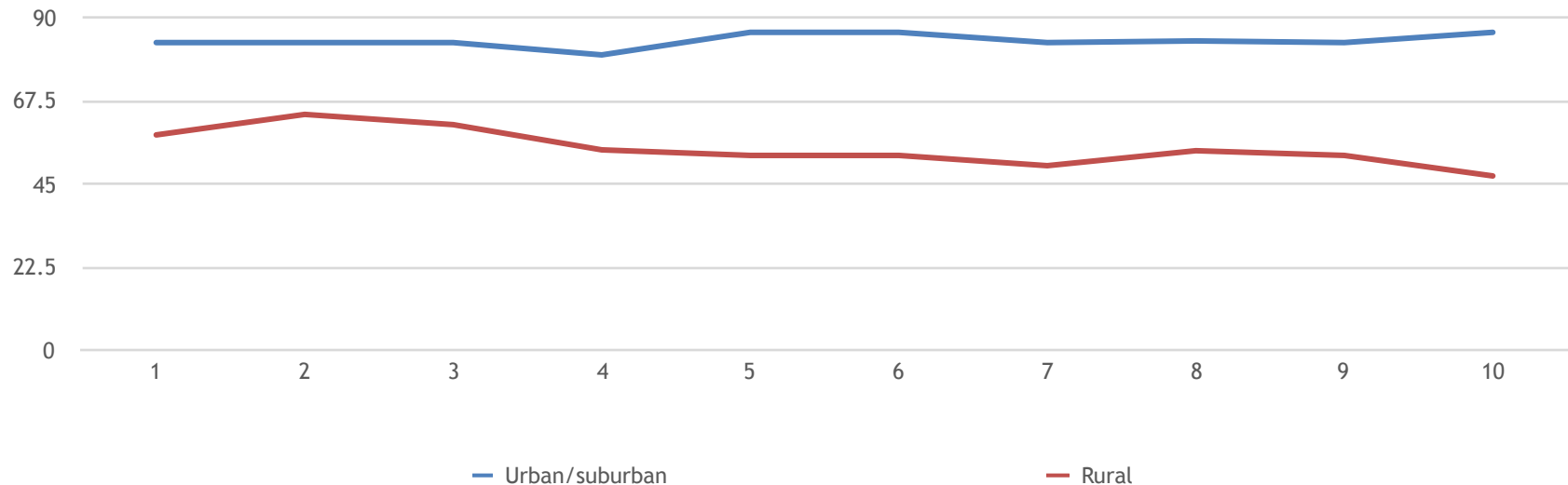
Findings - Story setting

- Most texts included a substantial portion of their stories set in urban/suburban contexts
- At least half of the texts included story elements located in rural contexts
- Over time, there is a slight trend towards fewer texts with rural settings

Setting - Urban-Rural

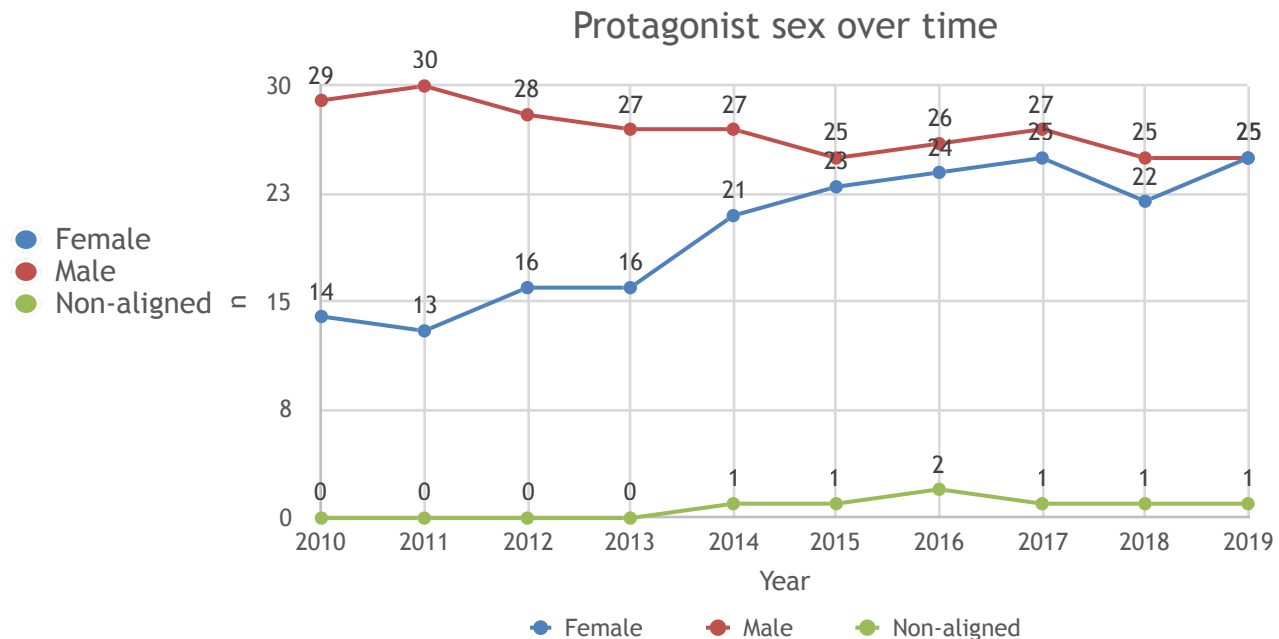
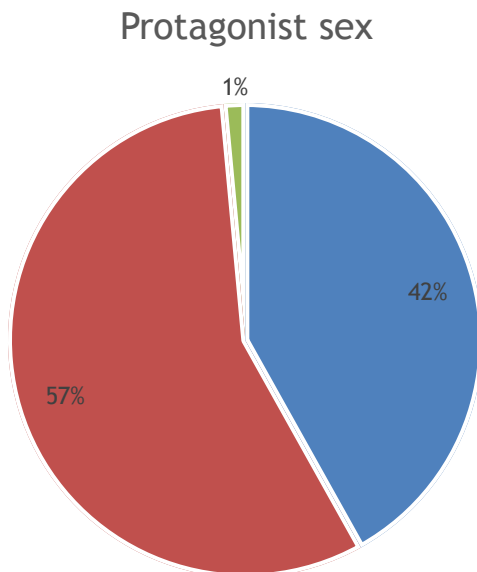


Urban - Rural Setting



Findings - Protagonist sex

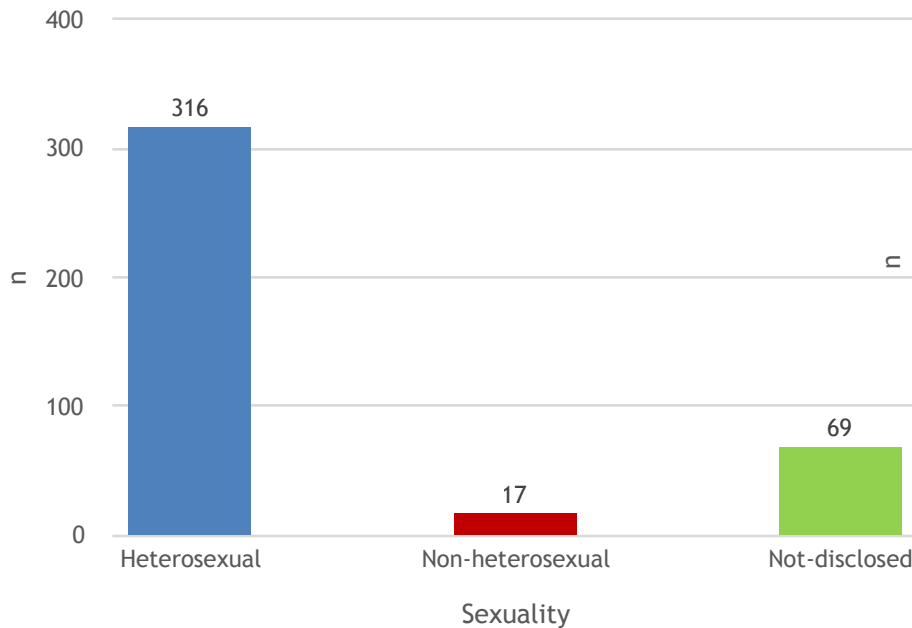
- The majority of characters, 57%, are male.
- The gap between male and females protagonists reduces over time
- A small number of characters, about 1%, were identified as non-aligned.



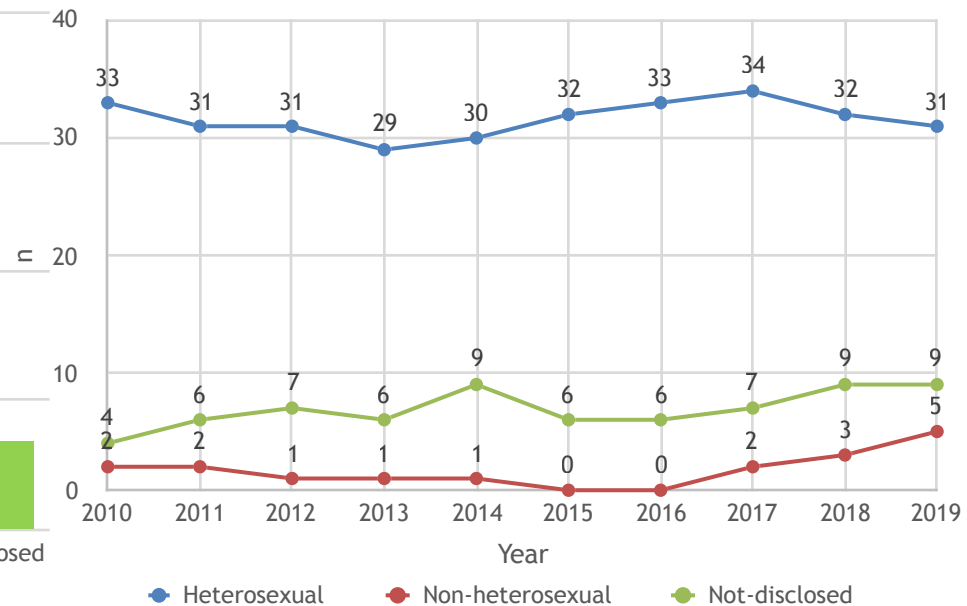
Findings - Protagonist gender

- The majority of characters, 79%, were identified as heterosexual.
- A small, but increasing over time, number of protagonists were identified as non-heterosexual (4%).
- Protagonists whose sexual preference was not identified represented 17% of the sample.

Protagonist Gender

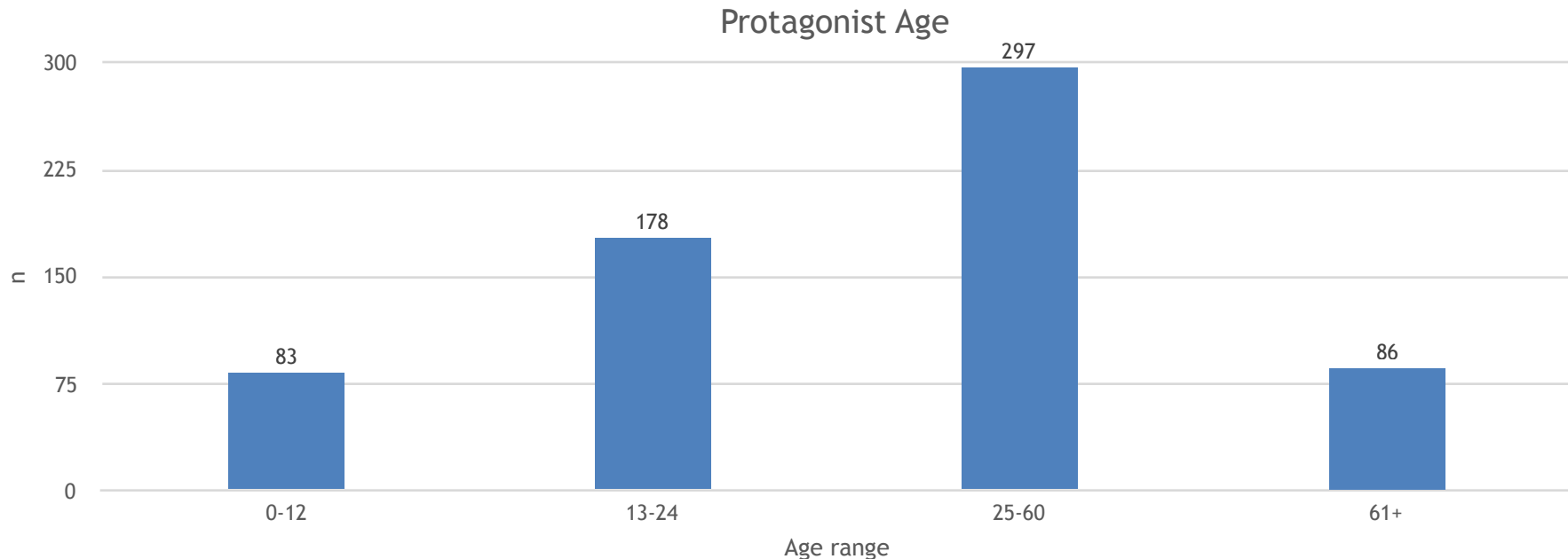


Protagonist Gender Over time



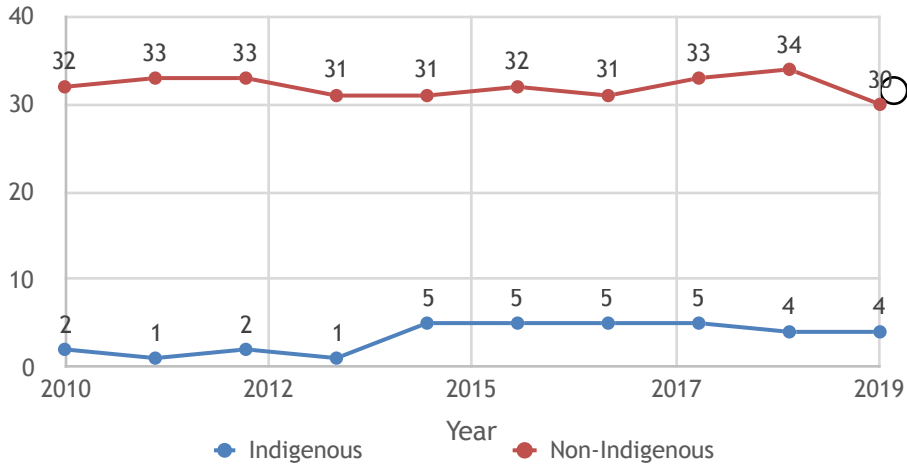
Findings - Protagonist age

- Most texts, 82%, contained a protagonist who was between 25 and 60 years of age.
- About half of the texts contained a protagonist of similar age to the students studying that text.
- Many stories tracked the life development of protagonists.

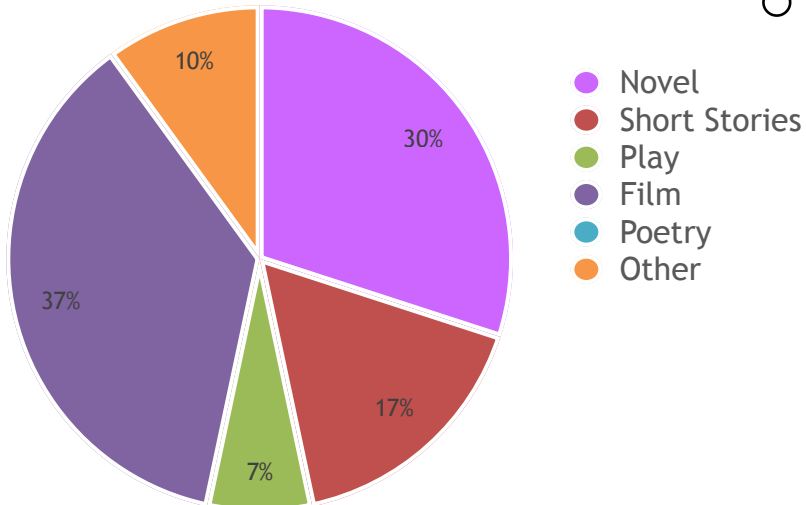


Findings - Protagonist Indigeneity

Protagonist Indigeneity over time



Text Type (Antagonist Indigeneity)



- Ten percent of texts contained an indigenous protagonist.

There is an increase in the number of indigenous protagonists over time.

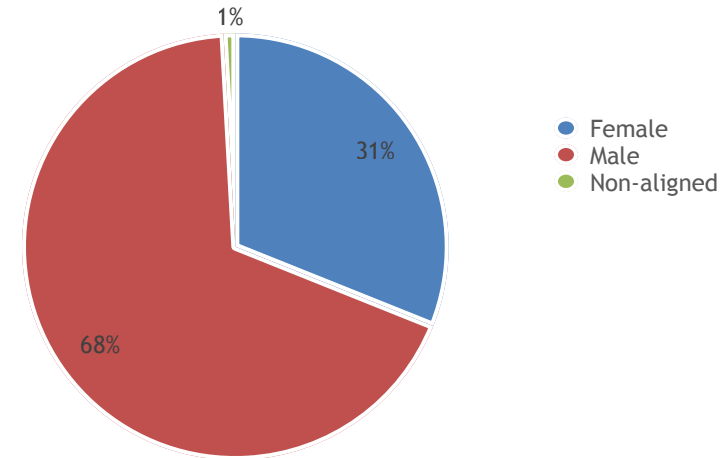
- While film represents 16% of all texts, 36% of indigenous antagonists were found in films.

Findings - Antagonist sex and gender

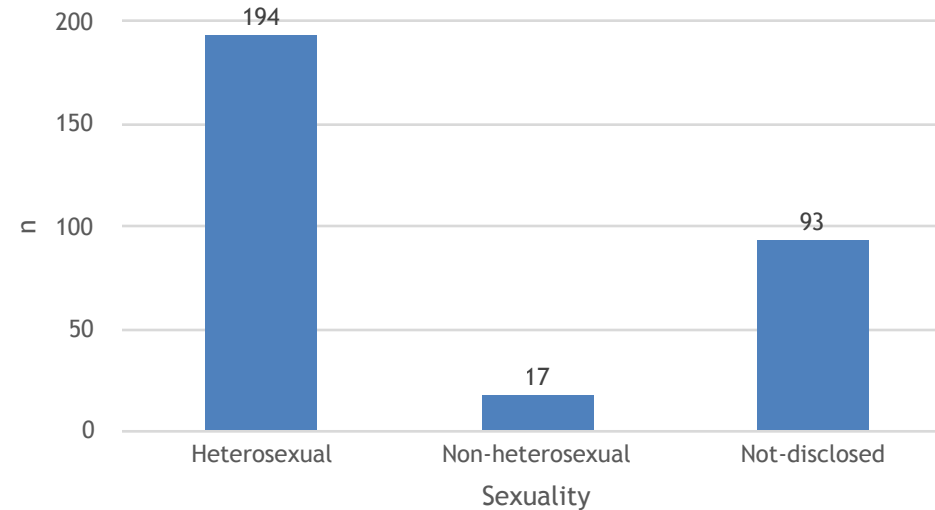
- Over two-thirds of all antagonists are male
- This trend is consistent over time

- Two-thirds of all antagonists are heterosexual.
- About 6% are identified as non-heterosexual

Antagonist Sex

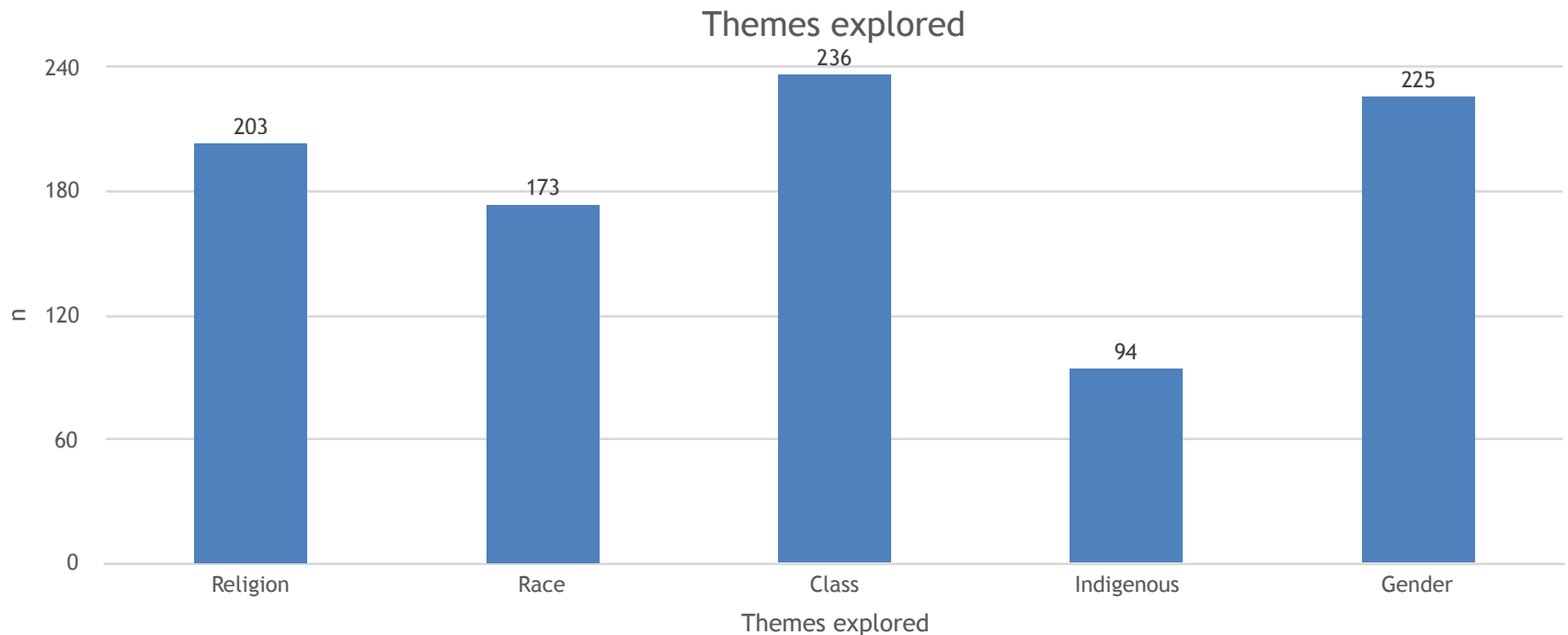


Antagonist Gender



Findings - Themes explored in texts

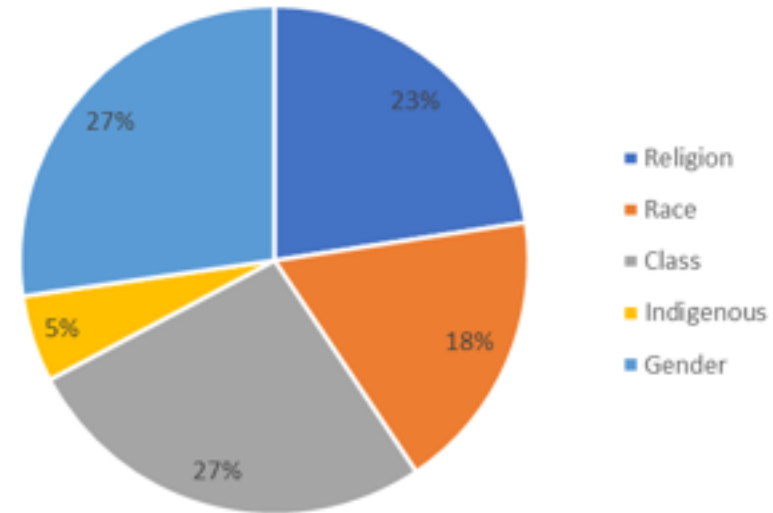
- Over two-thirds of texts explored issues associated with class and gender.
- Over half of texts addressed issues of religion and race.
- Indigenous issues were explored in less than one-third of texts.



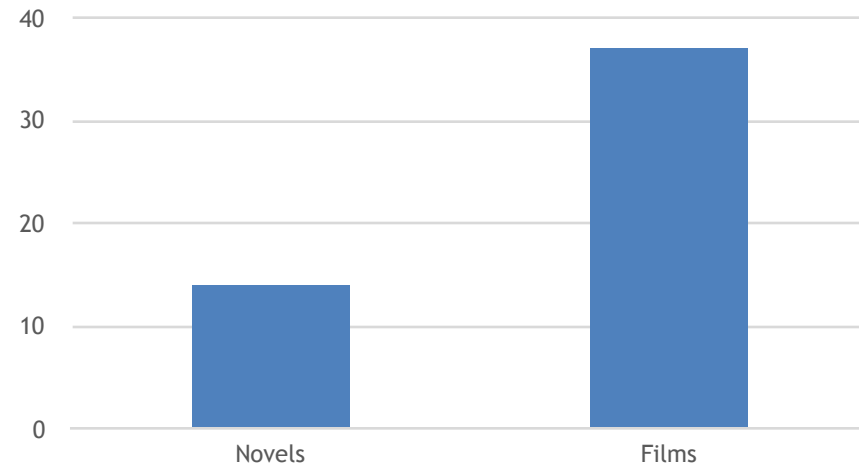
Findings - Themes explored in texts

- Only a small number of novels that explored one of the identified themes, explored indigenous issues
- Despite 36% of all texts being novels, only 14% of these explore indigenous
- 37% of films explore indigenous issues, even though only 16% of all texts are films.

Novel - Theme explored



Indigenous Issues in Novels and Films



- The figures tell us what might have been studied, not the texts that were actually studied.
- Some aspects of the data are problematic
 - Fiction versus non-fiction
 - Indigeneity
 - The significance of antagonists
 - Data related to short stories and poetry.
- The trends do not address the complex manner in which these texts becomes known to the reader.
- We are no closer to understanding the myriad of socio-cultural factors that have contributed to these trends

- Report
- Paper 1: Eng in Aus
- Paper 2: Findings
- Paper 3: Australiana (2019) ???
- Conference: AATE_ALEA Perth, July, 2018

What next?

- Look more closely at this data, including at individual and groups of texts, to understand these trends and what they says about:
 - The text-selection guidelines
 - The preferences of the text-selection panel
- Collect data about which texts teachers are selecting to study with their students and draw comparisons
- Speak with teachers about the text-selection decisions to understand the dispositions guiding them.

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