

# A challenging middle school SOSE unit and a resource for teaching teachers explicit strategies to support literacy learning

Patsy Norton | University of Southern Queensland

This is the second and final part of a unit based on the ERICA Model (Morris & Stewart-Dore, 1984). The first episode (Stage 1), which was published in Volume 17(2) of *Literacy Learning: the Middle Years*, laid the foundations for learning about democracy, government and the complexity of human interactions within and across societies and centuries. This episode contains Stages 2, 3 and 4. The unit is a modified version of a unit written in consultation with Keith Pagel, Karen Swift (leaders in literacy teaching and learning) and Robyn Bowman (Head of Department, Social Sciences) from James Nash State High School, Queensland. The modified version is printed here with permission.

## Stage 2 – Thinking through

In this stage of the unit, students read, interpret and analyse texts, and teachers make history skills (introduced through modeling in Stage 1) more explicit. Students of history need to develop skills that are critical to rigorous research. They should be able to:

- identify and analyse a range of sources – primary and secondary;
- analyse and evaluate evidence and draw conclusions from sources;
- analyse a variety of interpretations;
- discuss the values underpinning historical interpretations;
- identify and discuss problems with historical sources; and
- develop an understanding of how the narratives of history have been constructed.

### Step One

**Context:** Initiate a discussion of Australia's system of government to access student prior knowledge and help them think carefully about what 'system' they have in Australia. That is, start from the present, then go back to the Roman system.

**Strategy: Structured overview.** This strategy supports whiteboard summaries of collective brainstorming and provides visual displays of hierarchical relationships.

**Purpose:** To sort and categorise as the discussion progresses.

**Suggestions:** Brainstorm to determine what is known about Australia's system of government. Use the whiteboard to develop the overview. The overview is preferable to a word map, as the discussion can be controlled and manipulated a little more to establish the notion of a hierarchy. Most probably the discussion will start with peripheral characteristics of the system, such as voting rights, other rights, those with power. Be prepared to chop and

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change the categories and to gradually develop more formal categories to show students how to organise their thinking. In this way, you are showing them how to think and learn. Focus on the categories that we talk about when analysing the system of government. Figure 1 shows a structured overview. Resources No. 4, 5 and 6 may be useful for teacher reference.

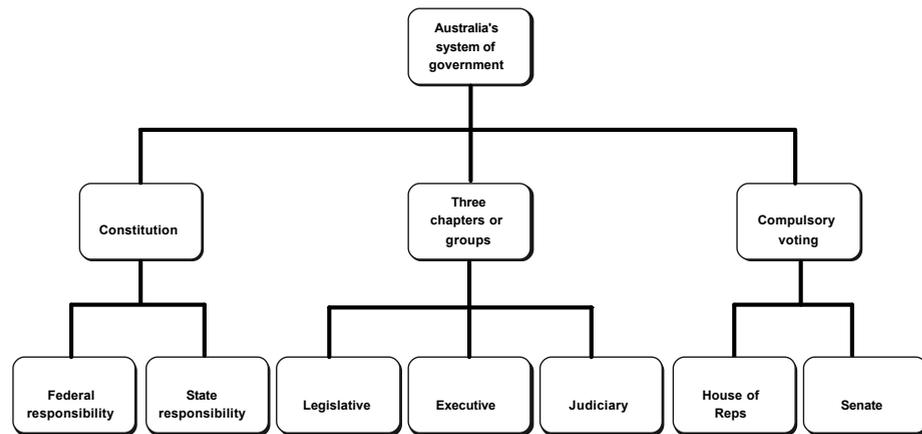


Figure 1. Structured overview.

## Step Two

**Context:** This step is about developing interpretation of visual texts.

**Strategy: Graphic outline – a time line.** This strategy is a way of representing events in time visually. It also promotes an appreciation of the magnitude of time.

### Purposes:

- To provide a framework for research by students, based on major 'chunks' of time in the development of Rome, from 753BC (Romulus as King) to 44 BC, and to create a degree of appreciation of that in a visual text;
- To engage students in approximate calculations of the span of the Monarchy, Republic and Empire;
- To emphasise the centuries of development of the Roman Republic and the relatively small life span of Julius Caesar in that context;
- To model the use of the strategy during research.

Suggestions: Indicate the three major 'chunks' of Roman history – i.e. Rome as:

- Monarchy – a government where an individual is the head of state for life and inherits position through birth;
- Republic – a government and society ordered under a set of laws and a society that recognises the rule of law;
- Empire – an autocratic form of government and territorial control of other states or countries.

Present the time lines using a data projector or chart. Ask students to draw the three 'chunks' of history to scale; calculate the number of years of each type of rule or government; discuss the relativity of time (e.g. Julius Caesar's life compared with the full period of Republic); compare the period of Roman history to that of Australian history and show on timelines. The depth of content or time given to this step is a matter of teacher judgment. Emphasise the dates to focus on the hard facts. Julius Caesar's life span is very brief in comparison to centuries of rule by monarchs and centuries of development of the republic. Discuss briefly the possible reasons for his fame. (Compare, for example, Kennedy and Caesar. Does assassination increase our fascination for such figures?)

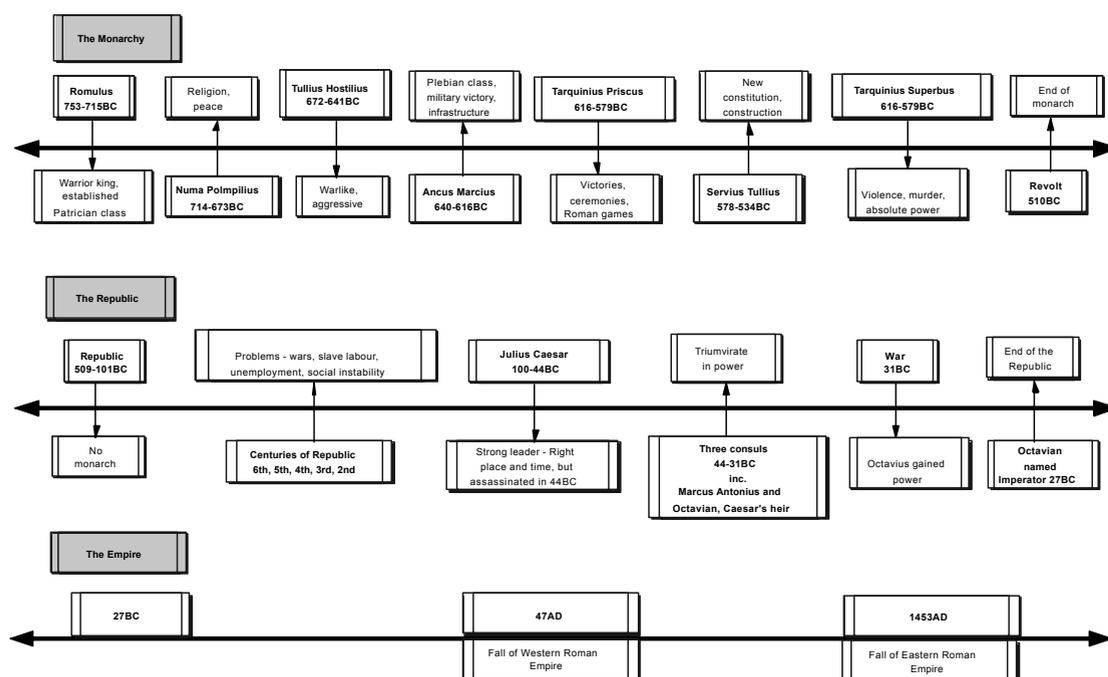


Figure 2. Timelines used as graphic outlines

## Step Three

**Context:** From this point, students should engage in rigorous research over a number of lessons, to determine the legacy of the Roman Republic, and the role of Julius Caesar in the Roman Republic.

**Strategies:** Retrieval chart, word map and structured overview

### Purposes:

- To interpret, discuss and reflect on the research findings;
- To sort and identify categories to organise data researched;
- To take a systematic approach to recording and evaluating sources used in the research process by use of a retrieval chart.

**Suggestions:** All students may benefit from broad research into Roman society and Julius Caesar, although sometimes it might be better to allocate focused research into the Roman legacy (Republican government in particular) to a group of very capable readers who can report on their findings to the class. The less capable readers may find it easier and more productive to focus only the life and role of Julius Caesar. Details of the life of a famous individual are likely to be more accessible in texts such as biography or narrative.

Each student, or pair of students, should access at least four sources (e.g. Resources No. 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11) and record their evaluation of the sources in the retrieval chart as demonstrated in Stage 1, Step Five. It is recommended that this process be treated carefully so as not to spoil the enjoyment of the chase for Year 8 students. The teacher may wish to give this chart considerable emphasis in Year 9. A teacher-librarian could work with students to revise efficient methods of doing web searches and using other library resources. Keywords that can assist research include: Roman Republic and government; characteristics of the Roman Republic; Roman Republic and democracy; laws and Roman Republic; rights and Roman Republic; Julius Caesar and Roman Republic; Julius Caesar and king; Julius Caesar and the end of the Roman Republic.

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Summarise the findings of the groups in word maps on the whiteboard or chart paper in discussion with the groups or class, then rework each word map into a more formal and hierarchical structured overview. Students may be sufficiently familiar with the strategies to work individually or in pairs to construct graphic texts.

## Step Four

**Context:** The previous steps in the unit should have provided a sufficient knowledge base for students to be able to read the text in this exercise and engage in conversation about it.

**Strategy: Cloze exercise.** This strategy asks students to fill in spaces in a verbal text with words of appropriate meaning. There are no set, correct words, nor should a box of 'choices' be given. The students need to be encouraged to read around the spaces and look for context clues, while engaging in discussion with a partner or group. This is an exercise in comprehension and interpretation, not a 'test' of correct words.

### Purposes:

- To read a given verbal text closely and interpret meaning in context;
- To use context clues to construct meaning;
- To engage in purposeful group work.

### Cloze exercise

Read the following extract (from Resource No. 12). Complete the gaps by putting in a word that makes sense in the sentence. The words around the gap will give you clues. Read forwards and backwards as you try to find an appropriate meaning. When you have finished, discuss your choices with your partner. Be prepared to defend all choices. There is not necessarily one right answer:

Caesar is remembered as one of history's greatest generals and a key ..... of the Roman empire. As a young man he rose through the administrative ..... of the Roman republic, accumulating power until he was elected ..... in 59 BC. Over the next 15 years he led ..... armies against enemies abroad, especially in Gaul, while ..... Pompey and others for political control at home. In 45 BC, he reached his ultimate success, being named dictator of Rome for ..... That rule was short-lived: the next year he was stabbed to death in the Senate by a group led by his ..... Marcus Junius Brutus. Caesar's life and death were dramatised in William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, with Caesar's famous death line: 'Et tu, Brute? Then fall Caesar!' Caesar is thought to have been ..... on March 15th, a date known in the Roman calendar as the Ides of March.

## Step Five

**Context:** This step is designed to support close reading of a text.

**Strategy: Three level guide.** This strategy supports close reading and interpretation of a given text at three levels – literal, interpretive and applied. It should encourage debate and exchanges about meaning. Risk-taking and justification of opinion should be encouraged. Therefore, the strategy should not be used as any kind of test.

### Purposes:

- To stimulate connections between a contemporary situation (Tonga) and prior knowledge (earlier activities re leaders/monarchs);
- To utilise media text as a resource;
- To engage in purposeful group work.

**Suggestions:** The use of the contemporary situation in Tonga brings in the ‘so what’ factor. The exercise will encourage students to apply what they know to other times and places. The connections need to be emphasised and made explicit by the teacher before and after the strategy is implemented. When the three level guide and discussion have been completed, engage the students in a discussion about power. This discussion will support the assessment which focuses on Caesar’s misuse of power. Compare the Tongan situation with the Australian situation. Ask the students about what power Australia’s current monarch has.

### Three level guide

This three level guide uses two media articles by David Brooks (Resource No. 13). At no point should these texts be given to the students as examples of ‘correct’ answers. That would defeat the purpose of the exercise and any attempts made at risk-taking by the students. Read carefully the two media articles. Complete the three levels of reading that follow according to the given instructions. When you are finished, discuss your decisions with your group. Provide justification for your choices.

#### Level 1: Literal level

Tick those statements that can be found in the text, not necessarily in exactly the same words.

- ..... King George Tupou V gave up all his political power.
- ..... Tongans celebrated King George’s coronation.
- ..... Monarchs from other countries were invited to the coronation.

#### Level 2: Interpretive level

Tick those statements that you can infer from the text. (That is, read between the lines.)

- ..... George Tupou V now has no power in legal matters.
- ..... Leadership by the monarch is valued by all Tongans.
- ..... The pomp and ceremony of George V’s coronation were respected and understood by visiting monarchs.

#### Level 3: Applied level

Tick those statements that are general, abstract ideas you agree have been presented in the text (i.e. statements the author would agree with).

- ..... The monarch as head of state controls a powerful judiciary.
- ..... Political representatives are chosen by the people in a democracy.
- ..... Monarchs are figureheads only, with no real power.

## Stage 3 – Extracting and organising

This stage of the unit is where students are encouraged not only to sort and collate data, but also to synthesise what they know. It is useful to implement strategies that direct thinking towards the intended translation activity or assessment task of Stage 4.

### Step One

**Context:** Students have data about two systems of government, but need to bring these two sets of data together.

**Strategy:** Retrieval chart

**Purpose:** To develop a cause-effect relationship by identifying those elements of Australia’s system of government that can be linked to, and possibly attributed to, the Roman Republic.

**Suggestions:** The students will need to be given the elements in the left hand column of Table 1. Discuss these first, then ask mixed ability groups to jot notes in the next two columns following discussion. After allowing time to do this, do a joint construction using

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student feedback on the whiteboard. Also ask students to make individual charts, adding personal notes as well as using the whiteboard notes.

Table 1. Retrieval chart

Identified elements	Roman Republic (legacy)	Australian system of government
Power given to ...		
Liberty (rights) given to ...		
Checks and balances evident in ...		
Voting by ... and for...		

## Step Two

**Context:** Students have amassed a considerable amount of information about Julius Caesar.

**Strategy: Venn diagram.** This strategy identifies intersecting or disjoint sets, along with common elements between sets. It is valuable for working through the processes of comparison or contrast. The visual representation of overlapping sets or non-overlapping sets (circles) is very helpful to learners.

**Purpose:** To extract and compare what can be found from both primary and secondary sources about Julius Caesar's strengths and weaknesses.

**Suggestions:** Set up groups to extract information from a range of sources, as well as from summaries of their prior research and class discussions. Emphasise the intersection of the sets, which should represent the commonalities identified from both primary and secondary sources (see Figure 3). Discuss group decisions and detail 'agreed' commonalities on the whiteboard.

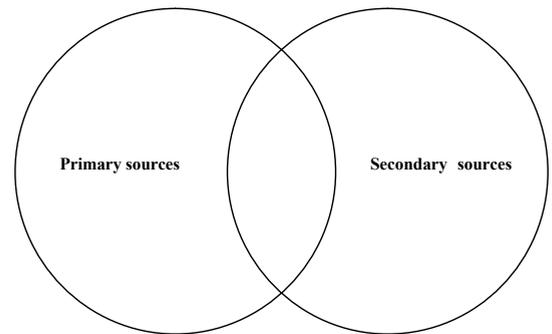


Figure 3. Venn diagram

## Step Three

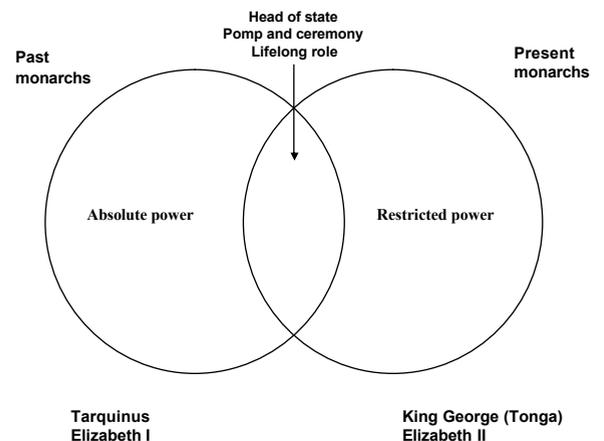
**Context:** Prior work on the three level guide included a final statement 'Monarchs are figureheads only, with no real power'.

**Strategy: Venn diagram**

**Purpose:**

- To compare key ideas about monarchs as leaders in past times and present times;
- To focus on the concept of power in a political context to support later assessment re Julius Caesar.

Figure 4. Venn diagram comparing past and present monarchs



**Suggestions:** Start a discussion about the statement ‘Monarchs are ...’, with an emphasis on the notion of power. Introduce the contemporary Australian situation to the discussion. Construct a Venn diagram on the whiteboard (see Figure 4). Use it to compare the power held by monarchs such as Elizabeth I or Tarquinius Superbus (534–510BC) in past times with that held by Elizabeth II or King George of Tonga.

## Step Four

**Context:** Prior discussion about the power of leaders. This is an opportunity to extend the discussion to the debate about whether Australia should be a constitutional monarchy or a republic.

**Strategy:** Venn diagram

**Purpose:**

- To compare the republic and monarchy;
- To extend knowledge and understanding about power.

**Suggestions:** Develop a Venn diagram using questioning and feedback from students to identify the similarities and differences between a republic and a monarchy with reference to Australia. Focus on the importance of the constitution (set of laws). Ask questions about whether the election of a head of state in a republic is more characteristic of a ‘true’ democracy.

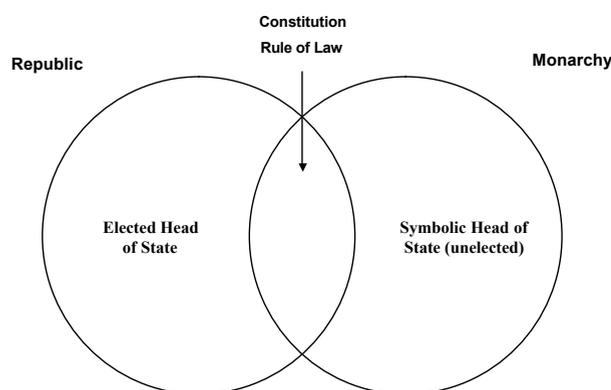


Figure 5. Venn diagram comparing a republic and a monarchy

## Stage 4 – Translating

This is the stage where learners can use a written task to represent what they know and understand. It should challenge the students to answer the ‘so what?’ question and focus on higher order thinking. It does not have to be an assessment task, but this one is.

## Assessment task

**Context:** Research, analysis and discussion of the Roman Republic; Julius Caesar – a great personality of history; and concepts of leadership, democracy, government and law.

**Scaffolding for the task:**

- Discussion of ‘moral’ using scenarios.
- Jointly constructed concept maps around ‘coin’ and ‘moral’.
- Class work with teacher on top level structure (cause-effect) and language structures in paragraphs.

**Descriptors of standards:** Derived from standards published by the Queensland Studies Authority on its website (see <http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/assessment/qcar.html>).

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**Task requirements:** Read the text below, which presents the view that 'the coin killed Caesar'.

## Julius Caesar, Emperor and Dictator, assassinated 15 March 44BC

*Gaius Julius Caesar is one of the most famous men in history. At the end of his brilliant military and political career he had gained control of the Roman state. His puppet senate heaped more and more honors upon him. In February 44 BC the senate named him dictator for life. Many senators, however, feared that he wished to become king, ending the Republic. On the 15th of March 44 BC, 63 senators attacked him with knives they had hidden in the folds of their togas. This most famous of assassinations plunged the Roman Republic into 17 years of civil war, after which it would re-emerge as the Roman Empire.*

**The coin that killed Caesar.** *In February 44 BC, Julius Caesar became 'Dictator for Life' and the first Roman to put his own portrait on the coinage of the Republic. Republican senators viewed this as the beginnings of monarchy. This coin type and others like it provided some of the motivation for Caesar's assassination on 15 March 44 BC.*

Adapted from the website, *Forvm ancient coins*, available from <http://www.forumancientcoins.com/catalog/roman-and-greek-coins.asp?vpar=523>

### Your task is:

- To write a justification for this point of view in 1–2 paragraphs of approximately 300 words. Include a bibliography of sources using Harvard style.
- To write one paragraph to accompany your justification, starting with the words 'The moral of the story is ...'.

### Criteria sheet:

Assessable elements	A	B	C	D	E
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>	Discrimination and prioritising of evidence that shows coin and other elements as power grabbing.	Discrimination in selection of evidence that shows coin and other elements as power grabbing.	Selection of evidence that shows coin and other elements as power grabbing.	Selection of slim evidence to show coin and other elements as connected to Caesar's assassination.	Selection of slim evidence to show coin and other elements as connected to Caesar's assassination.
<b>Investigating</b>	Inclusion of critical and relevant primary and secondary sources in justification.	Inclusion of relevant primary and secondary sources in justification.	Inclusion of primary and secondary sources in justification.	Inclusion of primary and secondary sources in weak justification.	Inclusion of minimal sources and little or no justification.
<b>Communicating</b>	Evidence of top level structure (cause-effect) and effective use of associated language structures. Statement of moral with effective elaboration.	Evidence of top level structure (cause-effect) and deliberate use of associated language structures. Statement of moral with elaboration.	Evidence of top level structure (cause-effect). Statement of moral with little elaboration.	Erratic evidence of top level structure (cause-effect). Opinion given.	Little or no evidence of top level structure. Opinion given.
<b>Reflecting</b>	Connection between action and consequence evident. General application to broad context given.	Connection between action and consequence evident. General application to broad context given.	Connection between action and consequence evident. General application to broad context given.	Connection between action and consequence evident.	Connection between action and consequence not evident.