

**Critical literacy in international curriculum frameworks: Kevin Donnelly
“A Canon We Can’t Afford to Overlook”, *The Australian*, 9 August 2007**

Kevin Donnelly argues that critical literacy is rampant in Australian syllabuses and barely rates a mention in his preferred English National Curriculum and the Californian Language Arts Syllabus. Donnelly makes this argument in support of his position that a supposed emphasis on leftist ideology and ‘political correctness’ in English curriculum frameworks in this country has lowered educational standards.

THE FACTS:

The National Curriculum in English in England is built around 4 key concepts: competence, creativity, cultural understanding and critical understanding. Key Stage 4 includes these items with respect to the latter two:

Cultural understanding

b Exploring how texts from different cultures and traditions influence values, assumptions and sense of identity.

c Understanding how spoken and written language evolve in response to changes in society and technology and how this process relates to identity and cultural diversity.

Critical understanding

c Forming independent views and challenging what is heard or read on the grounds of logic, evidence or argument.

The Californian Language Arts Syllabus for Grades 11 and 12 contains the following key statements:

3.2 Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim.

3.5.c. Evaluate the philosophical, political, religious, ethical, and social influences of the historical period that shaped the characters, plots, and settings.

3.8 Analyze the clarity and consistency of political assumptions in a selection of literary works or essays on a topic (e.g., suffrage, women's role in organized labor). (Political approach)

3.9 Analyze the philosophical arguments presented in literary works to determine whether the authors' positions have contributed to the quality of each work and the credibility of the characters. (Philosophical approach)

We’re not sure what Kevin means by critical literacy, but these seem remarkably like it to us.