

These notes are for:

- Secondary - years 9-10
- Secondary - years 11-12

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Visual Art

Example of:

- Picture book/visual text

Style and Techniques:

- Poetic prose
- Allegory
- Duality/dichotomy
- Juxtaposition/contrast
- First person, present tense narrative
- Artistic style: chiaroscuro

Themes:

- Identity
- Independence
- Choices
- Belonging vs. alienation
- Outsider
- The “Other”
- Emotional and physical journeys
- Crossing boundaries

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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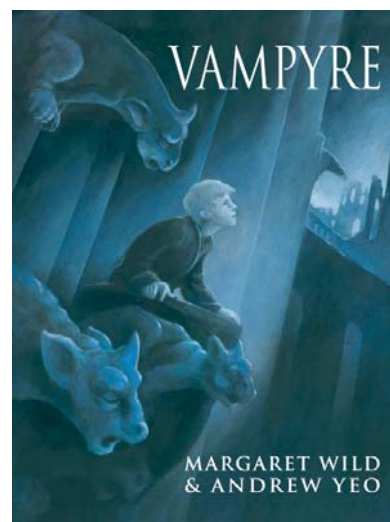
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Vampyre

Vampyre

Author: Margaret Wild
 Illustrator: Andrew Yeo
 ISBN: 9781921529221
 ARRP: \$29.95
 NZRRP: \$31.99
 Pages: 32
 September 2011



Synopsis

I am Vampyre. Feared. Despised. I live in darkness. I long for light.

From the depths of his vampyre world, a vampyre boy reflects on the joyous days of his childhood and his current life as a vampyre.

This monumental picture book takes the reader on an intensely emotional journey from a world of darkness to light. Sophisticated illustrations and evocative prose are seamlessly interwoven to create a rich and nuanced text perfect for study at a secondary level. The book operates as a powerful allegory, exploring complex themes of identity, choices, belonging and alienation.

Author/Illustrator Information

Margaret Wild is one of Australia’s most highly regarded and awarded children’s book authors. Some of her works include *There’s a Sea In My Bedroom*, *The Very Best of Friends*, *Old Pig*, *The Midnight Gang*, *Nighty Night!*, *Fox and Wolves in the Sitee*. Margaret has two titles in the Walker Classics series: *Going Home* and *A Bit of Company*, both illustrated by Wayne Harris.

Andrew Yeo is a talented new illustrator from Sydney, Australia. *Vampyre* is his first picture book.

How to use these notes:

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Vampyre*. Many of these are targeted specifically at senior students, while others will be appropriate for earlier years. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

Margaret Wild on *Vampyre*

“I don’t write much fantasy, so I never planned to write a story about a vampire boy. But when I stumbled across the word “vampyre” this unusual spelling sparked my imagination. It seemed ancient and evocative, and I also liked the fact that “pyre” with its connotations of burning was part of the word.

At the back of my mind, too, was the pressure that some parents put on their children to join the “family business”. So I wondered what would happen if a vampire teenager decided he was going to take a different path and how would he achieve it ...

When I wrote the story I was aware that there were many “vampire” books around, so I was delighted when Sarah Foster, the publisher of Walker Books, liked this story and wanted to publish it. She teamed me up with a brilliant new illustrator, Andrew Yeo. This is his first book and I think it’s an incredible piece of work – very moody and beautiful and I love his use of dark and light.

I haven’t actually met Andrew yet. This may seem surprising but it often happens with the creation of a picture book, for various reasons. He worked very closely with the art director and editor, and I was shown his work at progressive stages, from pencil roughs to finished artwork.”

Andrew Yeo on *Vampyre*

“The illustrations attempt to capture an internal desolation evocative of the text, drawing inspiration primarily from the introspective atmosphere of Rembrandt, and coupled with the melancholy grandure found in Romanticism's aesthetics and its sensibilities.”



In the Classroom

Before Reading

- What do you expect this story to be about? What genre do you think it will be?
- When and where do you think the story is set? What gives you this impression?
- Without having read the story, what is your impression of the character depicted on the front cover? How would you describe his facial expression and body language? What emotions do you think he is experiencing? Does he seem a character the viewer is supposed to empathise or identify with or is he presented as distant and ‘other’?
- Write a vignette inspired by the cover of the book. Your vignette may describe events that occurred immediately before or after the scene, could portray the character’s internal thoughts and feelings, or could explore a theme or mood suggested by the illustration.



After First Reading

- After reading the book for the first time, write a journal entry focusing on your own response. What emotions did it arouse? Which parts of the book affected you the most? Did you relate to any of the characters? Were there any immediate messages you took away from the book? Are there any questions you have?
- Wild writes, "As with most of my stories, it is the emotions in the text which interest me most." What adjectives would you use to describe the mood, or dominant emotion, of the book? Compare your adjectives with a classmate's.

Close Reading - Page by Page

Cover

- Consider the author's spelling of the word "vampyre". How do the connotations of this word differ from the more conventional "vampire"? What ideas or images do you associate with it?
- What are the dominant colours used on the cover? What mood do they create? Look closely at the illustrator's use of colour around the boy's profile. What might this suggest?
- How has the illustrator established a relationship between the gargoyles and the boy through the composition of the cover image? What might he be trying to convey through doing this? Think particularly about the ideas associated with gargoyles. For instance, monstrosity, superstition, the Medieval period and "stoniness" or a lack of feeling.
- Comment on the font used on the cover. What words would you use to describe it? Use the font tab in Microsoft Word or a similar program on your computer to experiment with different fonts for the title. You may also like to vary the use of capitals letters and lower case. Choose the three representations you consider most effective and present these to the class, explaining why you have chosen them.

Title Page

- How has the notion of duality (two-sidedness) been raised in the title page?
- What are some ideas typically symbolised by birds? (Some possible answers could be freedom, peace and escape.) How do these ideas correspond with the ethereal, almost ghostly appearance of the birds on the title page? What might these birds represent?
- The composition of the title page suggests the phases of the moon. Why might Yeo have introduced this idea?

Page 1-2 "I am Vampyre ..."

- Wild introduces her protagonist in the first person. Why might she have adopted this voice?
- The protagonist identifies himself as "Vampyre" rather than providing a name. Why does he do this? What role does

the capital letter play? How would the effect have altered if he had said, "I am a Vampyre".

- What conflict is introduced in the final two lines? How is this binary reflected in the illustrations accompanying the text?
- A vector is a line, whether visible or invisible, which draws the eye in a particular direction or to a particular object. Locate the following vectors in this image and identify their purpose. This could be to highlight a particular object or to create a particular feeling or mood:
 - the gargoyles' bowed necks
 - the subject's gaze (i.e. where the boy is looking)
 - the right ear of the gargoyle in the foreground of the picture
 - the ears of the gargoyle below the balcony
 - the edges of the balcony
 - the lines of the building in the foreground of the picture
 - the silhouettes of the buildings in the background of the picture.
 Are there any other vectors you can identify in this image?
- What attitude towards the protagonist is suggested by the positioning of the gargoyles? Do they seem to be bowing down to him? Protecting him? Looming over him in a threatening manner? Imprisoning him?

Pages 3-4 "Fully grown, I am now ..."

- How does the protagonist feel about his "role"? How do we know this? Consider facial expression and body language.
- Why has the illustrator again chosen to position the boy amidst the "pack" of gargoyles? Who might the gargoyles represent in this instance?
- The brevity of Wild's language draws attention to contrasting images and ideas. What is unexpected, and even shocking, about the juxtaposition of the words "embrace" and "attack" and "kill"?

Pages 5-6 and 7-8 "I loved being a child ..." and "playing hide-and-seek ..."

- The narrator shifts tense, adopting the past tense to reminisce fondly about his childhood. How does this change your attitude towards him?
- What is unexpected about the narrator's daily routine as a child? Without these details, would you have viewed him as anything other than a typical, happy child? Can you relate to any of his memories?
- How do the text and images work together to establish a sense of belonging in this double-page spread? How does this contrast with the preceding pages?

**Pages 9-10 “I loved being a boy ...”**

- Identify the author’s use of repetition. What tone does this create? Wistful? Regretful? Nostalgic?
- Copy out the verbs used in the text on each page. What ideas are suggested by each verb?
- The narrator’s use of language alters as he remembers his childhood, with the sentences becoming longer and more fluid and rhythmical. Why has this change occurred? Think particularly about the protagonist’s emotions.
- The gazes of the animals and boy are all directed at the one spot. How does this help create a sense of belonging and acceptance?
- The herd of deer is an inversion of an earlier image from the book, imitating it while radically changing the meaning attached to it. Which earlier image does it bring to mind? How are these two images both similar and different?
- How does the composition of the double-page spread suggest the protagonist’s sense of freedom as a child? Think particularly about the relative size of objects and their positioning. Is this freedom real or just illusory? Explain your answer.

Pages 11-12 “Birds shun me now ...”

- How has the protagonist’s situation changed now that he has matured? How is this contrast emphasised by the structure of the language? (Think particularly about the number of lines on the page.)
- Write a list of synonyms for the word “shun”. Read the sentence aloud, substituting a new word for shun on each occasion. How does the feeling of the line alter with each new reading? Write a mood poem inspired by the word “shun”.
- Why does Yeo present this scene from an overhead, or bird’s-eye, perspective? How does this choice of angle make the protagonist appear? Experiment with redrawing this scene from other angles such as eye-level and low-angle. How does this change the mood of the illustration?
- What directions are the birds facing? Do they seem afraid of the boy or merely indifferent? How are they positioned to focus attention on the boy? Does this vantage point make you feel distant and detached from him, as if you were a scientist viewing him through the lens of a microscope, or does it instead emphasise his loneliness, vulnerability and isolation? Compare your response with a classmate’s.
- Is the protagonist’s gaze an example of an offer or a demand? (A “demand” is where direct eye contact is made with the viewer, thus compelling their attention,

while an “offer” is when no direct eye-contact is made and the viewer is free to look where they please.) What effect does this gaze have?

Pages 13-14 “And in the villages ...”

- Why is repetition used at this point of the story? Consider both what has happened before and what change takes place on the following pages.
- What is the significance of the sharpened stakes the villagers are armed with? What are some other popular beliefs about vampires? (You may like to use the internet to research this.)
- How does Yeo use visual techniques to convey the villagers’ hostility towards the protagonist? Some ideas could include:
 - the villagers’ faces being covered by their helmets, suggesting coldness, anonymity and an unwillingness to engage
 - their spears creating vectors pointing at the protagonist
 - the diagonal slope of the rooflines in the background creating an additional vector to the protagonist
 - the lit windows of the houses in the village evoking eyes staring down accusingly
 - the composition of the image, with the edges of the mountains hemming in, or entrapping, the protagonist from both sides of the page
 - the positioning of the protagonist alone in the foreground, emphasising his alienation and powerlessness in contrast to the villagers’ communal strength
 - the use of a subtle low angle perspective to emphasise the villagers’ power over the protagonist
 - the protagonist’s cowering body language, protective hand gestures and fearful facial expression further emphasising his vulnerability
 - and the protagonist’s upturned face and gaze acting as a vector to the aggressive villagers.

Pages 15-16 “I repudiate my ancestry ...”

- What connotations does the word “repudiate” have? For instance, it could sound haughty and lofty, suggest a religious renunciation or casting off, or evoke the legal system. What do you think the protagonist means when he says he repudiates his “ancestry”, his “destiny?” How does his family respond? Why do you think they respond in this way?
- How are the colours in this spread different to those used in earlier ones? Why has this change occurred? What mood does it create? Is this mood appropriate for the scene, in your opinion? Explain your answer.
- In what ways is this illustration reminiscent of a classical religious painting? Think particularly about the body language of both the father and mother. (It may be helpful to look up the definition of “pieta”.) Do you think this resemblance is deliberate on the part of the illustrator?

**Pages 17-18 “Late one afternoon ...”**

- Yeo has used the gargoyles as a framing device for the image. What ideas is he trying to emphasise through doing this? Think particularly about the textual symbolism of the gargoyles and the attitude they convey towards the protagonist's actions.
- What is the significance of the protagonist going out into the sun? Think especially about the verbs Wild uses to describe his actions. Do you interpret his actions as teenage rebellion? Disloyalty to his family? Attempted self-annihilation? Self sacrifice? A gesture of independence? An attempt at redemption? Something else altogether? Discuss your answer with a classmate. Is their interpretation similar or different to yours?
- What contrasting images or ideas are expressed in the language used on these pages? For example, the son's cautious “creep” as opposed to the father's frantic “dash”. How does the layout of the text visually enact the idea of duality or binary oppositions?

Pages 19-20 “I am ill ...”

- The protagonist claims his father, “belts him with words”. What is suggested by this metaphor?
- Does the boy's description of his father match the accompanying illustration of him? What might this suggest about his reliability as a narrator?
- Write a scene showing the conversation the mother and father might have had as they tended their ailing son. Explore their differing attitudes towards him, as well as the reasons for their actions.

Pages 21-22 “I am Vampyre”.

- How are visual techniques used to reinforce the protagonist's decision to separate himself from his family? Consider light and colour, vectors and the positioning of characters.
- The protagonist's hand creates a vector towards the door, while his gaze creates an opposing vector towards his sleeping family. What does this suggest about his internal state?
- Curtains are a key element of the mise-en-scene on this page and in the preceding one. What might the curtain symbolise? Some ideas to consider could include:
 - the curtain as a symbolic barrier or division, with the protagonist having left childhood through his actions
 - the notion of enlightenment or understanding suggested by curtains being pulled aside
 - concealing or hiding shame
 - acting, pretence and illusion versus reality, as suggested by associations with the theatre.
- Why do you think the protagonist waits until midday to emerge? What is significant about this time? Why does he not simply leave when his family falls asleep? What does this suggest about his resolution?

- How has the protagonist's mantra (repeated statement of belief or identity) changed? Why has this change occurred?
- Compose a diary entry for the protagonist as he prepares to venture outside. Focus particularly on his feelings and motivations rather than his actions. What fears, regrets and uncertainties might he be experiencing as he waits? What has prompted him to make this decision now? What are his hopes and expectations for the future?

Pages 23-24 “The sun blazes ...”

- How is the protagonist's vulnerability portrayed in this double-page spread? Think about composition, angle, colour and size.
- What is the main feeling or emotion this image evokes in you? Compare your response with a classmate.
- How does Wild's language suggest energy and determination? Consider sentence and word length, pace and verb choice.

Pages 25-26 “Deep in the abyss ...”

- How does Wild intensify her language to reflect the protagonist's frantic efforts to climb out of the abyss? Think particularly about the role of punctuation.
- What is the main technique the illustrator uses to emphasise the arduousness of the protagonist's struggle?
- Can the protagonist's climb out of the abyss be seen as a symbolic test of strength or endurance? What do you think is at stake? Can you think of any parallels from literature or art?

Pages 27-28 “ I emerge scorched ...”

- How has the mood altered in this spread? How is this portrayed through colour and light?
- What literary techniques does Wild use to show the physical toll the protagonist's journey has taken on him? Consider alliteration, assonance, half-rhyme and personification.
- The word “weep” is particularly evocative, calling to mind the biblical verse, “Jesus wept”. Do you think this is a deliberate allusion by the author? If so, what ideas about the protagonist could she have been trying to convey? You may like to look at the verse in its original context first.

Pages 29-30 “In the forest ...”

- The final line of the book is: “The birds sing”. What is the significance of this line? What does it suggest about the protagonist's future?
- Compare the first and last page of the book. Could they be considered inversions of each other? What change has occurred between them?
- Is the protagonist still “Vampyre” at the end of the novel? Discuss your answers as a class.

Analysing & Discussing Unpacking the Themes

- Decide which word you feel is the most important on each page. Arrange these words on the page to create a poem summarising the text. Compare your poem with another class member's. Have they chosen the same words as you? Discuss the reasons for your choices.
- Do you consider the language used in *Vampyre* closer to poetry or prose? Argue your opinion.
- Most narratives are told in the past tense, yet Wild chooses to relate the vast bulk of her story in the present tense. Why do you think she does this? Rewrite selected sections of the text in the past tense. How does this change the meaning and impact of the story? Which version is more powerful?
- Why do you think the author chose to make her story about a vampire? What could she have used in its place? How would this have changed the story for you?
- How important is the setting of this story to the story itself? Would the story have been different if set in the modern world? Would its overall effect have been less powerful or more powerful?
- In her comments on page 2, Margaret Wild writes: "At the back of my mind ... was the pressure that some parents put on their children to join the "family business". So I wondered what would happen if a vampire teenager decided he was going to take a different path and how would he achieve it ..."

Can you think of any examples from your own life where you, or someone you know, has "repudiated" their "ancestry" and chosen their own path in life? Some examples could be casting off a religion, a cultural observance or a family tradition. How did the family respond? Discuss your responses in small groups.

- Define the following literary terms: juxtaposition, contrast, duality, dichotomy and binary. Discuss how these concepts are evident in *Vampyre* in relation to the following:
 - Light vs. dark
 - Belonging vs. alienation
 - Individuality vs. conformity
 - Acceptance vs. rejection
 - Man vs. monster
- How do the above binaries overlap in the text? What other examples of duality or contrast can you find? What might the creators be trying to highlight through their use of dichotomy?
- Vampyre* can be interpreted as an allegory. Read on this level, what different things might the protagonist's journey represent? If you view the story as an allegory, does the issue of what happens to the protagonist after the story ends become more or less important?

- The protagonist of the book is both emblematic and an individual. In what ways does he represent an idea? In what ways is he presented as an individual with his own unique identity? Which role is more crucial in your opinion?

Belonging and not belonging – The Vampyre as an Outsider

- In all the illustrations, the protagonist is consistently presented on the edges, or peripheries of the page. Why might he have been positioned in this way? Think particularly in terms of alienation and marginalisation.
- The "Other" is an individual who is perceived by a group as not belonging or being different in some fundamental way. Research the concept of the "Other". Where did this concept originate from? Why is this concept important socially? What have different philosophers said in relation to it? (Some philosophers to consider could include Hegel, Simone de Beauvoir, Lacan and Foucault.) How does this concept relate to *Vampyre*?
- Why is the Outsider such a popular perspective to write from in literature? What might writing from this perspective allow authors to do?
- Use the worksheet provided to analyse how the notion of the Outsider is explored in *Vampyre* and other texts of your choice. Try to choose a variety of text types. Some texts to compare *Vampyre* with could be:

- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (novel)
- *The Outsider* by Camus (novel)
- *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys (novel)
- *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger (novel)
- *Medea* by Euripides (play)
- "Tithonus" by Tennyson (poem)
- "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot (poem)
- *Pan's Labyrinth* by Guillermo del Toro (film)
- *Never Let Me Go* by Mark Romanek (film)



Exposure
Mal Peet
(novel - transformation of *Othello*)



Tyranny
Leslie Fairfield
(graphic novel)



The Merchant of Venice
Gareth Hinds
(graphic novel)

You may also like to visit the following websites for further text suggestions:

- Inside Break
www.insidebreak.org.au/belonging/
- NSW Dept of Education & Training
www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/schoollibraries/teachingideas/belonging/index.htm
- HSC Online
http://hsc.csu.edu.au/english/area_of_study/belonging/3634/aos.htm#list

- After completing the table in the previous question, use this information to write an essay in response to one of the following questions. (These questions are modelled on past HSC Area of Study essay questions).

1. To what extent have your perceptions of belonging and exclusion been influenced by the texts you've studied? In your answer, refer to *Vampyre* and another text of your choosing.

2. "Despite an individual's desire to belong to a group or community, their experience is often one of rejection and alienation." How do the texts you have studied depict the processes and results of belonging and/or not belonging?

3. "Not belonging is a far more difficult path to travel than that of belonging". How do *Vampyre* and at least one other text explore experiences of belonging and not belonging?

Researching

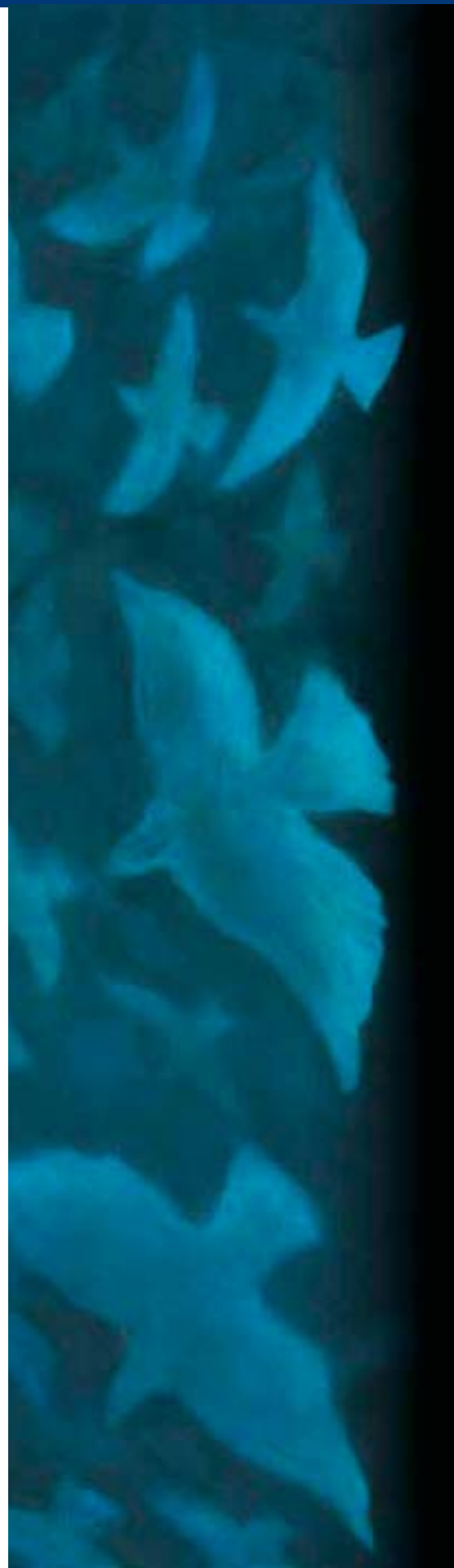
- Andrew Yeo uses a chiaroscuro style in his illustrations. Use the internet to research this style, then create a slideshow with examples. Who are some of its most famous exponents? What subjects do you think chiaroscuro is best suited to? Why? Create your own artwork using this style. Some artists to consider could be Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Rubens and Georges de La Tour.
- Research other representations of the vampire in literature, film and art. Choose one example and compare it with *Vampyre*. Some ideas could include *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, *Camilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu, *The Vampyre* by John Polidori, *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice, the painting *The Vampire* by Philip Burne Jones, the films *Nosferatu* directed by FW Murnau and *Let the Right One In* directed by Tomas Alfreson.

Create a Venn diagram showing how their presentation of their subject is similar and different to Wild's and Yeo's.

Creating

- Use "wordle" or a similar program to create a word cloud summarising the key ideas of the book. (<http://www.wordle.net/>)
- Write an acrostic inspired by the book using the title "Vampyre".
- Write a first-person poem about your own identity. Focus on one particular conflict or issue you see as central to your being.
- In small groups, create a tableau (a sculpture created from the body) to symbolise an emotion from the book. Consider body language, posture and facial expression. Perform your tableaux to the class, and have the audience try to identify the emotion being communicated.
- Compose a collage-style visual representation of the text on an A3 sheet of paper. Your representation should convey the text's themes, mood, and values, as well as its subject (what is it about). Consider how you can use colour, line, shape and technique to express your ideas. Write a reflection statement explaining your work.
- Design a new cover for the book. Present your work to the class, explaining the visual techniques you have used to convey your understanding of the book's subject, themes and mood.
- In small groups, compose a soundscape to represent the protagonist's journey. Each group may like to take responsibility for one double-page spread of the text, or for a certain stage of the plot such as orientation, climax or resolution.

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For information about new releases, the latest awards news and links to a range of teacher resources, sign up to our education newsletter at www.walkerbooks.com.au/Teachers

THE OUTSIDER

Use the table below to compare and contrast how the concept of **the Outsider** is presented in *Vampyre* (Margaret Wild & Andrew Yeo) and one other text. Copy the table into your workbook if you require more space or would like to compare additional texts.

Title		
Composer/s		
Text type		
Summary of text		
Description of Outsider		
Effects/consequences of Outsider status		
Themes		
Style and Techniques		
Quotes/Examples (related to the concept of the Outsider)		
Links to other texts		