

PURPLE PROSE

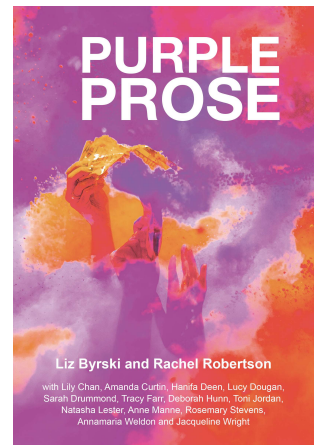
Anthology (various authors)

Introduction by Liz Byrski and Rachel Robertson

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Themes: gender, identity, family, feminism, ageing, transformation

Year level: Years 10 – 12+



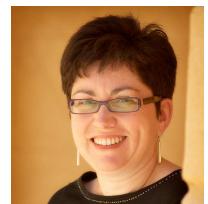
ABOUT THE BOOK

Purple Prose introduces fifteen new works of non-fiction by Australian women writers, each responding to the colour purple. From a story about King George's coronation gown, to pigeon fanciers, and the Dockers' Purple Haze, in the hands of these authors, purple takes many forms and meanings.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Liz Byrski is a writer, journalist and broadcaster based in Perth, Western Australia. She has published many works of fiction and non-fiction. Her most recent book with Fremantle Press is *In Love and War: Nursing Heroes*.

Rachel Robertson lectures in professional writing and publishing at Curtin University. Her fiction and essays have been published in *The Best Australian Essays*, *Australian Book Review*, *Griffith Review* and *Island*. She is the author of the memoir *Reaching One Thousand* and her essay of the same name was joint winner of the 2008 Calibre Prize.



STUDY NOTES

LITERACY: COMPREHENDING TEXTS THROUGH LISTENING, READING AND VIEWING

Before reading:

Introduction

1. *We both have our own histories and associations with purple, but an important one was purple as a feminist colour and this was why we envisaged a book by women.* (p. 7)
 - a. Why has the colour purple been linked to the suffrage movement?
 - b. Create a timeline of the suffrage movement in Australia, and beyond.
 - c. What is your personal definition of the term 'feminism'?
 - d. Why do you think the term 'feminist' became unpopular at various points throughout history?
 - e. Do you believe there is a stigma attached to this word today – if so, what is it?
 - f. Do you personally identify as a feminist – why/why not? Turn to a partner and share.
 - g. In your opinion, can men identify as feminists – why/why not?
2. What does the phrase 'purple prose' commonly refer to?
3. Why was this selected as the title for this collection? (pp. 9–10)

Genre study

4. Create a class definition for the term 'creative non-fiction'. What is it that makes creative non-fiction different to fiction?
5. Create a definition for the following terms and name an example you have read of each:
 - a. Memoir
 - b. Personal essay
6. Brainstorm some of the characteristics of memoirs and personal essays – how might they be structured? What technical elements of 'fictional' storytelling do they employ (e.g. character, dialogue, scene/setting) to tell a 'true' story? What is their relationship to 'truth' and to subjectivity?

Creative writing – prompt

7. Before reading the collection, complete the same task as the fifteen authors:
Contribute a piece of memoir or a personal essay inspired by purple. (p. 8) Share these essays as a class.
8. *What was astounding to us was the wide diversity of responses to a single writing prompt.* (p. 9) Were there common themes? Were there any surprises? What do the responses reveal about the contributors?
9. Bind the essays together to make your own unique class collection entitled 'Purple Prose'.
10. Consider repeating this exercise with a different colour: e.g. *contribute a piece of memoir or a personal essay inspired by the colour ...*

During reading:

Language and textual analysis; engaging and responding; reflecting

Comprehension strategies to model and practise

- Inferring
- Summarising
- Identifying key ideas/themes
- Drawing conclusions

Reader response journal

Have students keep a reader response journal throughout their study of *Purple Prose*. This document should record any important quotes and emotional reactions to each essay, as well as any questions or discussion topics they may wish to raise. The reader response journal can also be used at the end of the unit to help students in planning critical responses to essay questions. It functions as a bank of important quotes from which to select and structure a convincing argument.

Themes

Have students make notes on themes that are pertinent to each essay. These may include:

- Gender
- Feminism
- Personal identity
- Family
- Transformation/metamorphosis
- Discrimination
- Travel
- Memory
- Childhood
- Ageing
- Nostalgia

Focus points

Additionally, have students compile notes under the following subheadings as they read each essay:

- a. **Setting** – how has the author portrayed setting (particularly Australian towns and cities)?
- b. **Framing** – what issues of bias and subjectivity (acknowledged or otherwise) have been introduced by having the author as the 'framer' of the piece?
- c. **Structure** – how has the essay been crafted and do you think this is effective?
- d. **Literary devices** – how would students describe the **author's voice and style**?
- e. **Inter-textual references** – has the author quoted from other sources? Do you feel these sources enhance the piece?
- f. **Symbolism** – how have recurring motifs and metaphors been used? What are the possible significances of these?
- g. **Socio-historic context** – what is the socio-historic context pertaining to the piece?

Discussion questions for each individual essay:

The Things I Cannot Say by Natasha Lester

11. *My sister became my brother about fifteen years ago, a transition that was both a surprise and not a*

- surprise all at the same time. Because something was clearly wrong. She was withdrawn, antisocial, rarely worked, silent. She was locked in a body she hated, jailed by a gender she had not chosen.* (p. 15)
- a. How does the author build towards making the piece's central revelation? Why has she chosen to structure it this way?
 - b. What does she mean by the phrase '*jailed by a gender she had not chosen*'?
 - c. Create a definition for the term 'transgender'.
 - d. Create a timeline of the history of transgender rights in Australia and across the globe.
 - e. What particular challenges do you imagine transgender people may face in contemporary Australian society?
12. *How astonishing then, for someone who so rarely spoke, to make such a bold declaration to the world. Bold because, at the time, and still now, it was such an uncommon thing to do, to change gender. It was a thing not talked about, a thing thought by many to be deviant or taboo.* (p. 15)
- a. Do you agree that this was a bold decision?
 - b. Why do you think transitioning gender was/is, '*thought by many to be deviant or taboo*'? (p. 15)
 - c. Why do you think some people acted as though, '*the person she was and the person he has become have both ceased to exist*'? (p. 15)
 - d. Given this possible response, what impact might gender reassignment have on the individual, their family, and their community?
13. *... I never grieved for her, in case that grief was misconstrued as grief over my brother's decision, rather than over loss. A person still exists who is made of the same atoms as my sister. So what is there to lament?* (p. 17)
- a. What resources are available to help support friends and family members of transgender Australians? Why might this group of people also need support? Visit the following website to guide your research: <http://www.gendercentre.org.au/>
14. *A sister, for instance, is a female person, a 'daughter of the same parents', according to my Macquarie Dictionary in a typically unimaginative description. But what else is a sister?* (p. 16) In groups of four, consider an answer to this question.
15. *... the world lets us know, in countless tiny ways, that we must always have a declared gender and that gender, once granted, is part of our personhood.* (p. 16) Do you agree with this statement? What are these 'countless ways'? In pairs, create a list of examples.
16. *...the thinker in me understands the notion that gender is socially and culturally ascribed, whereas sex relates to the anatomical body one is born with.* (p. 18) Do you agree?
- a. If gender is 'socially and culturally ascribed', then what institutions within our society dictate gender norms?
 - b. How are traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes commonly reinforced? (e.g. through media: television, film, advertisement etc.)
 - c. Compare and contrast gender stereotypes across the globe – are there cultures where ideas of masculinity and femininity differ greatly to those in your community? What can we learn from considering these differences?
17. In teams of four, debate the validity for/against the following claim: *Gender is one of the primary labels we attach to people.* (p. 18)
18. *The bigger shift is to realise how hard it is for someone to change gender and sex, but still have the world treat them the same as anybody else.* (p. 19) How would you feel if you were in the author's brother's place? What kinds of discrimination do you think you might encounter?
19. *I imagine he sees how easily other categories in our lives can be changed – I shifted from marketer to writer, from daughter to mother – and these changes were celebrated...I announced the new label I was to give myself – 'I'm going to be a mum!' – we raised our glasses, moved on and no further explanations were required ... But, fifteen years ago, nobody popped a champagne bottle to salute my brother's more courageous and more significant transformation.* (p. 19)
- a. Why do you think people often feel the need to label one another (and indeed themselves)?
 - b. Can labels be positive as well as negative? Can they create a sense of freedom as well as entrapment?
 - c. Why do you think some labels are 'harder to shift' than others?
20. What does the author reveal about herself in the course of her story?
21. Having read this essay, what do you think is the significance of its title?

Maiden Aunts by Liz Byrski

22. Who were the 'surplus two million'? (p. 29)
23. What does the term 'maiden aunt' evoke?
24. *...all these women were seen as a problem, and discussions in parliament and in the newspapers of the day revealed a widespread disgust and fear of the impact of a surplus of women who would never marry.* (p. 29) Why do you think such fear existed? What is the threat to society that might lie in this idea of a single woman and, especially, a surplus of single women?
25. What is your first impression of Aunt Violet? (p. 24) Turn to a partner and share.
26. What kinds of women do each of the aunts represent?
27. *They belonged to another time, a little piece of history that I had allowed to drift away until they were gone...Who were they – these maiden aunts?* (p. 28) Research your own family tree – are there any maiden aunts in your family? Are there broader historical reasons for their unmarried status?
28. Research, construct and display your family tree in your classroom.
29. What was the 'Agency of Universal Aunts' created to do?
30. Research the various roles women played in the First World War (WWI).
 - a. How did gender expectations change after this conflict?
 - b. What jobs did Gladys and Lily adopt following WWI?
31. Do you think social class appears to have played a major role in the lives of each of the maiden aunts? (p. 34) If so, how?
32. *It was the recognition of that squandered opportunity to know Olive, Violet, Gladys and Lily that made me curious about the hidden lives of older women.* (p. 35)
 - a. How does the author's view of her aunts change across time?
 - b. Why do you think the lives of older women may sometimes remain 'hidden'? Do you think this is also the case for older men – why/why not? Turn to a partner and share.

Blue Meat and Purple Language by Toni Jordan

33. *I love the idea of acquiring a new way of speaking, but there's a thickness in my brain that won't allow it.* (p. 36) Have you ever tried to learn second language/multiple languages? How did you find this experience? Turn to a partner and share.
34. *There was a balladry in the way she spoke. There was a rhythm and a meter, a weight and a measure. My mother had quite the ear for alliteration. If she was weeding the front garden and a poor struggling plant refused to yield, she would chant: come on, you fucking futile floral fuckhead.* (p. 37) In pairs, create some alliterative strings of profanity!
35. Consider: when does swearing become an art form? What are the different contexts in which swearing might be deployed?
36. What was the inspiration for the title of this essay? (p. 39)
37. *Now that I am a full-time writer of fiction, listening to the way people speak is a part of my job.* (p. 41) For one week, pay especially close attention to the ways in which the people around you speak. Use a notebook to record your observations.
 - a. How does the way someone speaks express who they are?
 - b. What kind of language do you personally use? (e.g. slang, swearing, informal, formal)
 - c. Does your language vary according to context and audience? In what way?
 - d. Can you identify your own lexicon? Are there particular words that you use regularly?
 - e. Answer these questions about yourself, then ask a partner to answer them on your behalf. How do your partner's answers about your speech compare to your own ideas?
 - f. Write a short creative monologue that captures how you talk. Write another piece in which you say the same thing but change the audience.
38. *... she's identified the arbitrariness of swearing, something I've always been intrigued by. It's always seemed to me that many societal taboos are more about power than righteousness.* (p. 40) Do you agree – is there any such thing as a 'bad word'? What makes a word taboo? Turn to a partner and discuss.
39. *Who did make up these stupid fucking rules? What makes 'intercourse' more acceptable than 'fuck'...Is it simply an undefinable malice behind the syllables, or does it betray our deep societal inhibitions? Or perhaps it's simply a quick and shallow means of class identification...* (p. 40) What is your opinion – what gives one word more 'weight' or 'charge' than another? Share ideas as a class.
40. *The acceptability of swearing is also deeply gendered.* (p. 40) Do you agree – are there certain 'curse words' that are permissible for men but not for women? If so, what are they?

41. Do you personally use 'purple language'? How often? With whom? In what circumstances?
42. *When we open our mouths without self-censorship, humans reveal our deepest selves and our values. All of us.* (p. 40) Why do you think freedom of speech is widely recognised as a fundamental human right? In which countries is this still not recognised in 2015 – why?
43. *I don't feel that the recent easing of taboos about bad language reflects anything upon our moral nature other than humankind's glorious tendency to adore breaking rules. I certainly never felt that my mother's swearing reflected upon her character in any way.* (p. 43) In teams of four, debate the validity of the following claim: 'Swearing reflects negatively on one's character.'

Into the Whipstick by Anne Manne

44. *The best way, I have discovered through trial and error, is to give her music and take her out into nature.* (p. 47) Why do you think music and nature appeal so much to the author's mother when other things have fallen away?
45. *If I were on an imaginary psychoanalyst's couch, doing a word association, the word which would fly out of my mouth at the prompt of the word purple would be fidelity. The next word would be grief.* (p. 47) What are the first two words you associate with the colour purple? Why? Turn to a partner and share.
46. *After much discussion, my mother bravely makes an anguished decision to sell her house so she can move closer to me, to a retirement village in Melbourne.* (p. 49)
 - a. Why do you think some people may be resistant to living in a retirement village?
 - b. What might be gained and what might be lost in making such a move?
 - c. Would you personally ever consider living in a retirement village – why/why not?
47. *The government help is skeletal. An assessment of 'low care' means only four hours of assistance per week. It is a meaningless category, assigned when someone can merely walk to a bathroom or to a dining room. All the cosy sounding mantras of, 'aging at home,' a geriatrician quips scathingly to me, really means, 'aging at your own expense.'* (p. 49)
 - a. Why do you think government support for so-called "low care" individuals in Australia is so inadequate?
 - b. In an ideal society, what provisions for aged care would be in place?
48. *Mum is worried about asking for help with her walker at the other end. My husband says that maybe she look at it another way; that people might feel pride in helping her, and that there should be a pride, not loss of dignity, in asking, that she has a right to be looked after. The right to dependence seems, in our independence-obsessed world, a radical but absolutely just idea.* (p. 51) Do you think that independent living is idealised more than it should be in your community?
49. *If old age is a countryside, the care foot soldier's population is once again largely female. Daughters, not sons, are expected to do the care work, although there are a few exceptions. There are female carers and domestic helpers, and predominantly female care workers in aged-care facilities.* (p. 51) Why do you think the bulk of care falls to women?
50. In small groups, discuss the validity of the following claim: *An adult child, even if they are decidedly unlovely to their elderly parent, is irreplaceable. A paid carer, even a lovely one, is replaceable.* (p. 53)
51. *Returning home I never felt quite the same about time. I began reading about how the working class and children were all integrated into the discipline of industrial time, the factory sirens, the school bells, the endless measurement and disciplining of their relation to time.* (p. 56) Do you think about time through this industrial framework? Or a model more akin to Anne Manne's metaphor of the Indian Railway? Turn to a partner and share.
52. *...this device also traps me: I am expected to respond at once, in a mere millisecond, to never be away from work, an expectation of instantaneity.* (p. 57) What are some of the positives and negatives about being connected 24/7 via modern technology? Create a list.

Velvet by Rachel Robertson

53. *We found this, my sister and I, upstairs at my mother's house in a box file that contained things from her childhood – old photos, a menu from her parents' wedding, and her birth notice... Because she is eighty-seven, my mother thinks it is time to pass on the contents...* (p. 60) What historical artefacts are there/might there be in a box belonging to your own family? Turn to a partner and share.
54. Is there a recognised 'memoirist' in your family? (p. 60) Who do you think this is? And why?
55. *The image appeared to me when I was reading A History of Silence by Lloyd Jones. Something in the texture of the writing summoned a form into the back of my mind. I put the book aside for a moment*

and allowed the shape to grow, and there it was, a pattern of lilac and purple petals, a texture that was almost velvet... (p. 62) Do you think writing can have a 'texture'? How would you describe the 'texture' of this piece, or of another piece in this collection? Turn to a partner and share.

56. In teams of four, debate the validity of the following claim: *...memory, too, is part imagination, each memory a recreation rather than a reproduction.* (p. 62)
57. *We use memories as a way of forgetting. What we remember allows us to forget other events and therefore create a coherent life story.* (p. 63) In what ways can memories be a form of forgetting? Why might someone choose to forget certain events in their life history?
58. *As Drusilla Modjeska has noted, imagination and evidence vie for ascendancy in memoir, and memoir itself, she suggests, is as much 'a mapping of a mind' as the recreation of experience. The purple paisley dress is now part of my family story whether it actually existed or not.* (p. 65) What elements of memoir might owe more to fiction than non-fiction?
59. *Undoing the past, too, is what the memoir writer does as she creates her narrative. Memoir asks: what is the shape of a life? And in answering that question, the memoirist reforms the past as she creates her patterning.* (p. 67) What patterns emerge in the structure of this memoir – how has it been crafted? (i.e. through a series of non-chronological memories all linked to the colour purple). Do you think this structure is effective?
60. *Over the years, I seem to have collected many purple items – cushions, vases, clothes, jewellery and glassware.* (p. 71) Choose a colour and make a list of the items in that colour that you have collected over time. Turn to a partner and share.

'Is a Magnificent Story': Interviews with Pigeon Fanciers by Sarah Drummond

61. Locate Mount Waychinicup on a map of Western Australia and view some images of the area.
62. What is a pigeon fancier? (p. 73) View a YouTube clip like the one referenced.
63. What are peregrines? (p. 74) What other dangers do pigeons face during races?
64. *I have to say that at this point I was dangerously close to becoming a pigeon fancier. I'd entered the murky world of a subculture previously beyond my ken.* (p. 75)
 - a. Create a definition for the term 'subculture'.
 - b. Research the history of pigeon racing.
65. *'Nah mate! The Italians. And the Aussies. Anyway. That's only half the story. This day...er, the bloke's name was Jordan. And the Ding's name was Mataboni, he was the one who owned the –'* (p. 76) How is racism evident in this excerpt? Why has the author included this story within her story about pigeon fancying?
66. Research the Kalgoorlie Race Riots in 1934. (p. 77)
67. The author encounters yet another pigeon fancier in Bali – why has she chosen to include this snippet in her piece?
68. *...pigeons who were given medals after World War I, for carrying one small but vital story strapped to their bodies.* (p. 81) Research the role pigeons played in WWI.
69. Visit the Albany Pigeon Racing Association website. (p. 81) Write a factual report about the sport.
70. *I knew that it only takes a single piece of footage of cruelty or negligence to go viral on the internet, and that he was carefully selecting the information he gave to me.* (p. 81) Do you think pigeon racing is a humane sport – why/why not? Turn to a partner and share.
71. *The thing is, what we are doing looks like a silly old hobby, but when the world goes back to bows and arrows, when everything breaks down...We have to maintain the old knowledge and not lose it...you never know, hey? One day pigeons may be the fastest way of communication that we have.'* (p. 82) Do you think this will ever be a possibility? What value is there in retaining 'old knowledge' in a world of technology?
72. Write a fictional short story about a scenario, *'when the world goes back to bows and arrows, when everything breaks down.'* Swap with a partner for critical feedback and editing. Share as a class.

Do You See What I See? by Tracy Farr

73. *I have a love of colour, in clothing, hair and nail colour, favouring bright, clashing colours, choosing them for the ways the juxtaposing colours assault my eyes. Peacock blue with clashing pink, blue and green should never be seen, stripes with florals, hair dyed flame red, fingernails painted the colour of spring grass. Aunt told me I dressed like a blind woman, not meaning it as the compliment for which I took it.* (p. 84)
 - a. What colours and patterns do you love and why?

- b. How would you describe your personal fashion sense? What kinds of clothes and shoes do you like? Who are your fashion icons? Turn to a partner and share.
- c. Fashion/art project: design and create an outfit or artwork (painting, sculpture, textile etc.) inspired by the theme: 'juxtaposing colours that assault the eye'.
- 74. *Does purple for you look the same as purple for me? And when I say purple, do I mean the same as you do, when you say purple? That's the question that preoccupies me: do you see what I see?* (p. 85) Turn to a partner and describe what you see when you imagine the colour purple? Is it possible to know that you and someone else are seeing the same colour? How do we know our sensory perceptions are shared? Discuss these ideas as a class.
- 75. *Isaac Newton recognised that colour is not a property of things but is generated by the eye and mind: 'Rays...have no Colour. In them, there is nothing else than a certain power and disposition to stir up a sensation of this Colour or that.'* (p. 85) Who was Isaac Newton?
 - a. How is the human eye able to 'see' different colours?
 - b. Label a diagram of the human eye and write an explanation of how it operates.
- 76. *...these models aimed to control or quantify colour objectively, to 'articulate a coherent colour system', but their differences only serve to indicate just how subjective colour is.* (p. 86) Which colour model are you familiar with? Where were you introduced to this and at what age?
- 77. How does the author utilise the motif of 'eyes' in the excerpts provided from her short story 'The Blind Astronomer'? *That story is full of eyes. There's the 'artist's eye' that the narrator employs, seeing the beauty in her science: 'I've seen the planets with an artist's eye, charted their courses with a sense of ... beauty ... It is a gift Aunt has given me'. But many more of the story's eyes are flawed: the peacock's feather with 'its eye eaten away'; the childhood operation to correct vision; a mark on a photograph that 'scratched out' eyes; even the disembodiment implied when the narrator remarks on resemblance, 'She had my Aunt's eyes'.* (p. 89)
 - a. What might the motif of the eye symbolise? Brainstorm ideas in pairs.
- 78. What is synaesthesia? (p. 90) Write a short story from the point of view of a narrator who is a synesthete – how might their descriptions of the world differ from others' around them?

Mary by Lucy Dougan

- 79. *Once, with old photos splayed about everywhere, a friend snatched up one and said oh my god that's scary, she has your serious face on, the one you use when you talk about art. I think I shrugged – normal, why not, to look like an ancestor, surely?* (p. 96) Is there a relative with whom you share a strong resemblance? Does resemblance come from physical likeness or something else?
- 80. *When I asked my mother what was in the trunk she said maybe the other life of the house. We found tatty papers, abandoned knitting, infant shoes and then the mask that my mother snatched up quickly.* (p. 97) Imagine that a family moves into your home fifty years from now, and finds it just as you left it this morning. Choose a room in your house and describe what kind of a story this room would tell.
- 81. *It was a face made of linen with eye-holes and a mouth. We took turns in it running crazily around the garden, but there was already something about the mask that made me wary, some itch or inexplicable periphery that it announced.* (p. 97) Using this excerpt as the opening line, write a short story. Share with a partner for critical feedback and editing. Share as a class.
- 82. *She sewed for society women in Melbourne in the last decades of the nineteenth century.* (p. 98) Is there still such a thing as 'society women' in your community? What are the parameters of this community? Where does their clothing and fashion come from?
- 83. How has this essay been crafted – what is the significance of each of the subheadings? Do you personally find this structure effective – why/why not? Turn to a partner and share.

The Trouble with Purple by Annamaria Weldon

- 84. *A Phoenician trading vessel surrounded by turquoise water off the coast of Gozo, my grandfather's native island, in the Maltese archipelago.* (p. 105) Locate this region on a map and view some images of the area.
- 85. *Early in adolescence I had learned of the link between my Maltese heritage and the Phoenician trade in purple dye. I promptly adopted the colour. The phase survived unkind remarks (a schoolfriend's observation that I was possessed by purple).* (p. 109) Have you ever felt 'possessed' by a specific colour? Why did you adopt this particular colour? Turn to a partner and share.
- 86. Research the history of the ancient Phoenicians and the Purple Trade Route.
 - a. When did this civilization exist?

- b. Where/how did they live?
- c. What are they most remembered for?
- 87. *Ever since the image of that ancient shipwreck appeared on my Facebook newsfeed, the possibility of composing a book-length suite of poems narrating Malta's place on the purple trade route has tantalised me.* (p. 112) Why was it named the 'purple trade route'? What is the source of the author's fascination?
- 88. How is it that past history – immediate or distant – can inform the sense of who we are? Why do you think some people are drawn to look for such connections?
- 89. Do you think that the author is descended through her father's side from the Phoenicians?
- 90. Do you think that she will go on to write her collection of poetry about Malta's place on the purple trade route? Turn to a partner and share.
- 91. Why has the author chosen to end this piece where she has?

The Red and Blue: Confessions of an (Unlikely) Dockers Fan by Deborah Hunn

- 92. *It's such a bloke's game. Full of macho boofheads – both on field and off – sleazy sex scandals, overpaid boys behaving badly, drunken end-of-year shenanigans, lads around the barbecue in daft beer ads, drug cheats and punch-ups and foul-mouthed sledging of the 'I fucked your mother/sister/girlfriend' variety, not to mention the puerile, misogynistic antics of John 'Sammy' Newman, et al., on Channel 9's The Footy Show.* (p. 117) Do you agree with this portrayal of AFL – why/why not?
- 93. Do you personally follow AFL? In what way might the AFL be seen to be a microcosm of the culture in which we live?
- 94. *Docker, femmo, lezzie, queer. Only the innocent or the irredeemably cynical can believe that colours are just decorative whims or markers to flog brands – they can show our loyalties, point to our passions and our vulnerabilities, shape and mark our identities, signify subversively...* (p. 120)
 - a. Why do you think the author feels that she is an 'unlikely' Dockers fan?
 - b. How can colours come to mean something that is more than superficial?
 - c. What are some examples of colours that carry meaning? How has this meaning come about?
- 95. *...it's hard to deny that the dominant representations in media and marketing remain: selfless mothers, nurturing support staff and, of course, glamorous WAGs on the red carpet. 'Are we changing stereotypes here,' Krien asks 'or simply reinforcing them?'* (p. 121) Is it possible to resist dominant representations of women in AFL? What is the relationship between clichés and the truth?
- 96. *In early 2015, at the same time as this piece was being finalised for publication, the AFL announced that one NAB Challenge pre-season clash would be themed as an official Pride match...Mark Evans, the AFL football operations manager commented: 'Diversity and inclusion is essential to our game. We say, "no matter who you are, where you are from or who you love, we can all love footy".' On March 15th on an oval featuring with distinctive rainbow markings, Sydney defeated Fremantle by nine points. I have never been prouder of my team.* (pp. 130–131) What evidence is there of homophobia existing within the AFL? In what ways do other forms of discrimination manifest in and around the game?
- 97. *...2005's AFL Respect and Responsibility Policy works to ensure that 'people throughout the AFL are aware and have structures in place that recognise that violence against women and behaviour that harms and degrades women is never acceptable.'* (pp. 118–119) What are the three officially stated key principles underpinning this policy? (respect, responsibility, participation)
- 98. *...the brave new world of sensitive new-age footy is not quite as reconstructed as it appears. The reality is that women who play the game still remain firmly on the outer paddock, devoid of the pay cheque and public recognition afforded to their male counterparts... double standards are still evident and young women who socialise off field with players can find themselves negotiating behaviours ranging from casual misogyny and objectification to sexual abuse and a band of brothers/big-business network that seemingly closes ranks to protect its own.* (p. 119)
 - a. Do you agree with the author that this is still the case?
 - b. What does this experience suggest about our culture as a whole?
 - c. Can the world of football be changed if the world around it stays the same?
- 99. *As for gay men, while the powers-that-be have, in fairness, certainly shown some recent efforts to be supportive, we have yet to see any AFL players 'come out', and meanwhile verbal slips by various football 'identities' make it pretty clear a culture of casual homophobia remains...* (p. 119)
 - a. Do you agree with the author that this is still the case?
 - b. What does this experience suggest about our culture as a whole?

- c. Can the world of football be changed if the world around it stays the same?

The Two Loves by Lily Chan

100. Who is Krishna? To what religion do worshippers of Krishna belong? Where did this religion originate from?
101. What is an ashram? Why might people visit them?
102. Create a class definition for the term 'guru'.
103. Who is Sai Baba?
104. *I tried my best to be worthy of his grace and resist the pull of pop culture and other things extraneous to the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, but upon returning to Narrogin and entering high school I listened to Kyle and Jackie O on the radio.* (p. 135)
 - a. Locate Narrogin on a map and view some images of this area.
 - b. Is there any irony apparent in the quotation above or is the author merely documenting her struggle?
 - c. Why do you think teenagers might pursue spiritual enlightenment or explore a direction of belief that is different to the one they have been raised with?
105. *What are the attributes of god? What does god mean to you?* (p. 136) Write your own personal response to these questions.
106. What do you think the author means in the final lines: *'Now I relish this new freedom. There is a vacancy of meaning. It is the mystery of the moment which keeps revealing itself without any reason or explanation, where karma holds no sway'*? (p. 137)
107. Write a short story inspired by the theme 'karma'. Swap with a partner for critical feedback and editing. Share as a class.

Purple Impressions by Rosemary Stevens

108. *Even the physicist Newton saw colours as vibrations like the seven notes on the musical scale, and I have read that purple translates to C, B sharp.* (p. 143) Listen to this note on a piano. Do you feel that it equates with purple – why/why not? Have you ever thought of colours as vibrations on a musical scale? What is the potential of thinking about the relationship between colour and music in this way?
109. What was the Impressionist Revolution? (p. 144) What were the impressionists trying to capture? (p. 141)
 - a. List some famous Australian impressionists – what did they contribute to the movement?
 - b. View artwork by John Russell. (p. 139)
110. Who were the Pre-Raphaelites? Compare and contrast Pre-Raphaelite artwork with Impressionist artwork – what makes each movement unique? Do the two movements have anything in common?
111. *More than a school, the Impressionist movement was a state of mind, diametrically opposed to the black and white, chiaroscuro mentality of the established order which was now being challenged...* (p. 145) What is the role of the creative artist in generating change in a community?
112. *Oils were layered in thick, deft strokes of broken hue to meet the moment, with no attempt to conceal brushwork. The results were considered shocking, and the artists often condemned as careless, puerile or mad.* (p. 145) What kinds of art are you drawn to? (i.e. realistic, abstract, absurdist etc.) Why? Turn to a partner and share.
113. The author describes purple as, *'...the colour of the velvet cloth wrapped around the book of koans my Zen teacher would uncover when gifting me the next conundrum to wrestle with in meditation, a koan in the Japanese tradition being a word or phrase to contemplate on the way to enlightenment. These are threshold words designed to take you from the world of everyday things into the essential nature behind them.'* (p. 142) Create a class definition for the term 'enlightenment'.
114. What do you make of the following conundrum: *the sound of one hand, the mountains, the valleys – all different and the same.* (p. 146) What do you think this means? What is the value in contemplating conundrums like these?
115. *Monet was particularly enamoured of Hokusai (1760–1849), acquiring six of his famous woodblock series depicting Mount Fuji at different angles, seasons and times of day.* (p. 146) View images of these pieces. Turn to a partner and share your own thoughts on the artwork.
116. *Apart from the haystacks, Monet's ultraviolet lily ponds are the works of art that continue to reverberate in memory long after that WA exhibition all those years ago.* (p. 147) View these pieces

by Monet. Turn to a partner and share your own thoughts on these artworks.

- a. What are some of the artworks that have continued to 'reverberate in your memory' long after you visited an exhibition in the past?
- b. What was it about these particular pieces that resonated for you? Turn to a partner and share.
- c. Can a piece of writing do justice to a work of art? Can it make you see a work of art in a different way?

Bruised by Jacqueline Wright

117. *I was proud of that bruise and, for a long time after, I wondered why. Now I know. To me, that bruise represented the internal bruise I'd suffered when my husband of eighteen years told me that he didn't love me anymore. No one can see those kinds of bruises. You carry them around inside you and knock them against the hard edges of life.* (p. 148) What other kinds of 'internal bruises' do you think exist?
 - a. When have you yourself been bruised, figuratively speaking?
 - b. When have you 'bruised' others?
 - c. What did you learn from these experiences?
 - d. What helped you to heal?
118. *'Embrace the enemy. Wish them all the love that you would wish onto yourself.' ... 'No deal!' All I could think of was how I wanted to bruise Jim back. Hurt him as much as he'd hurt me.* (p. 152) Have you ever found it difficult to forgive someone? Were you able to in the end? How did you reach the point of forgiveness?
119. *People like to give you advice when you split up.* (p. 153) What advice have you received following a break-up? Was it helpful – why/why not? What is the value in giving or receiving advice in a situation where someone has been 'bruised'?
120. *'Being a writer, you should know that there are many ways to imagine or interpret an event,' she continued. 'You've just chosen this story to see things through a particular lens.' 'It's not about lenses. It's about bottom lines. You either love someone or you don't.'* (p. 155) Why do you think that the author offers a multiplicity of voices in response to her own break-up and recovery – i.e. why do you think she has structured her piece in this way?
121. *'The stories we make about our lives are created through linking certain events together in a particular sequence across a time period and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them...we have stories about ourselves, our abilities, our struggles, our competencies, our actions, our desires, our relationships, our work, our interests, our conquests, our achievements, our failures.'* (p. 156) Create a list of your own 'life stories'.
 - a. Does this list define who you are?
 - b. Try to create another list of life stories that offer a different definition of who you are.
122. *She knew what I meant. She'd been going through a bit of shit herself and we often talk about how hard it is to change the way you look at things and stop thinking of yourself as a certain type of person.* (p. 160) Is it difficult to look at yourself in a different way?
123. *At my lookout I can better identify these norms and this helps me to embrace and celebrate difference instead of categorising people in terms of how different they are from the accepted story.* (p. 157) What are some of the predominant 'accepted stories' in your community?
 - a. Create a list with a partner.
 - b. Try to come up with a different 'story' using the same facts that presents this story in a different way.
124. *'Truth is stranger than fiction.'* I've filled notebooks as testimony to that saying. (p. 160) What do you think the author means by this? Write a short story entitled 'Truth is stranger than fiction'. Share with a partner for critical feedback and editing. Share as a class.
125. *The mango, like the tide, reminds me that people fall in and out of love and the world goes on regardless. Somehow, for me, this is comforting.* (p. 161) Do you personally find this idea comforting? Why has the author chosen this as the point to end her piece?

My Descent into Purple by Hanifa Deen

126. Conduct your own wardrobe inventory. (p. 162) What purple items can you find?
127. *Mum abided by the rule that little girls wore pink and little boys blue – blue was bold, blue was*

- strong – pink was gentle, pink was ‘nice’.* (p. 163) Create a class definition of the term ‘gendered marketing’.
- a. View this short video on the history of colour and gendered marketing in Australia:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JDmb_f3E2c
 - b. What are some of the positive and negative effects of gendered marketing? Create a list.
128. What was The White Australia Policy and when was it effective? (p. 163)
129. *...we were a proud family of Pakistani-Punjabi origin on Dad’s side and Kashmiri-Welsh on Mum’s. Both my grandfathers had entered (legally, I hasten to add) in the 1890s before the doors closed in 1901.* (p. 164) Locate these regions on a map of the globe. How has this diversity fed into the author’s sense of identity?
130. Create a definition for the term ‘racism’. In what ways can racism manifest itself in a community? What can be done to combat racism?
131. *...I nurtured at a time in our history when terms like ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘cultural diversity’ were not part of the Australian lexicon.* (p. 164) What do you think these terms mean? Do you think they work in practice today?
132. *This happened in the years before German reunification, when two Germanys existed – West Germany and East Germany, separated by the Berlin Wall.* (p. 166) Why was Germany divided in the past? What were some of the main differences between East Germany and West Germany?
133. *...I became redder and redder: jackets, scarves, boots, my auto Eric the Red and more importantly a way of looking at the world that crossed borders of race and ethnicity. Social Justice was the rallying cry for the red posse I rode with.* (p. 168)
- a. How does the author’s appearance stand for her beliefs?
 - b. What is the difference between race and ethnicity?
 - c. Create a definition for the term ‘social justice’. What social justice issues are you particularly passionate about? Why?
134. Who were the Red Army Faction? (p. 167) How was this group involved in terrorism?
135. Research the biography of Clara Zetkin. (p. 168)
136. How is International Women’s Day celebrated around the world today?
137. Why is purple the chosen colour for feminists?
138. *Non-conformity and defiance are traits that fascinate me perhaps more than they should.* (p. 168) Write a short story centred on the themes of non-conformity and defiance. Swap with a partner for critical feedback and editing. Share as a class.
139. *How do you define a feminist movie in the twenty-first century? Thelma and Louise, The Colour Purple – so many contenders – surely not ‘chick flicks’ – I hope not.* (p. 169) In groups of four, create your own definition of a feminist movie in the twenty-first century. List five examples.
140. *...my energy and commitment was focused on the nascent migrant workers’ movement and the emergence of ethnic communities’ councils around Australia supporting the new policy of multiculturalism, which in those days was not a ‘dirty’ word.* (pp. 170-171)
- a. Create a timeline for the migrant workers’ movement in Australia.
 - b. What do you think the author means when she claims that multiculturalism was once a ‘dirty word’?
141. *By the mid-1990s there were approximately 350,000 Muslims in Australia – the White Australia Policy was over. The vast majority of Australians looked at Muslims with indifference – the term ‘Islamophobia’ was not yet a part of Australian mainstream language.* (p. 171)
- a. Create a definition for the term ‘Islamophobia’. Why do you think this exists?
 - b. Do you think Islamophobia is present in your community?
142. *Begum Rokeya Hossain, more than a hundred years ago, created her own utopian vision in her 1905 satire Sultana’s Dream. In a country called Ladyland women run the country: women are the politicians, the scientists, the soldiers and the traders. Where are the men?* (p. 172) What do you think your world would look like if gender stereotypes were reversed? How would it be different from the present? Brainstorm ideas as a class.
- a. Write a short story depicting your own utopian version of the world. Swap with a partner for critical feedback and editing. Share as a class.
143. *Three years ago, inspired by Rokeya’s writing, and together with a small core group of Australian Muslim women, I began an online magazine written and produced by Australian Muslim feminists called Sultana’s Dream.* (p. 172). Access issues of this magazine here:
<http://www.sultanasdream.com.au/>

144. *I have always admired disobedient women in history, literature and real life...Clara Z., Rosa Luxemburg, Begum Rokeya, Emmeline Pankhurst and the English suffragettes, the New York garment workers, Simone de Beauvoir, Scheherazade, Madame Bovary, Marie Curie, Miles Franklin, Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinem, Lena Horne, Nina Simone, Ingrid Bergman, Katharine Susannah Prichard.* (p. 172) Add to the author's list of 'disobedient woman'. What are the effects (positive or negative) of thinking about women in this way?
145. *And in the twenty-first century – where are we now? Is the era of female empowerment over? Julia Gillard, as Australia's first female prime minister, would have something to say on the subject.* (p. 173) What do you, personally, have to say on this subject? Share ideas as a class.

Towards Metamorphosis by Amanda Curtin

146. What do you think the word 'metamorphosis' means?
147. Have you ever experienced a metamorphosis? In what ways did you change? Turn to a partner and share.
148. *Jenny Joseph's poem ['Warning'] has become a rallying cry for many women coyly referred to as.* (p. 176) Research the biography of Jenny Joseph here: <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poet/jenny-joseph>
149. Read Jenny Joseph's poem 'Warning' (<http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/jenny-joseph/warning/>) and have students make notes on the following:
- Point of view
 - Who is the speaker in the poem? How would you describe this persona?
 - What is the speaker's tone? Which words reveal this tone?
 - Is the poem ironic?
 - Figurative language
 - What images does the poet use and how do they relate to one another?
 - Do these images form a unified pattern throughout (a motif)?
 - What is the most powerful image for you and which of your senses does it appeal to?
 - How has symbolism been used in the poem? What do you think different images might symbolise?
 - Can you find examples of figurative language used to evoke imagery e.g. simile, metaphor and personification?
 - Can you find examples of metonymy, allegory or literary allusion in the poem?
 - Structure
 - How has the poem been structured?
 - Why do you think the poet chose to structure the poem in this way? Does the structure compliment the thematic concerns?
 - Are there any examples of repetition? What is the effect of this?
 - Can you identify distinct stanzas? A rhyme scheme, syllable count, or rhythm?
 - Is the 'shape' of the poem significant? (i.e. has it been written so as to visually represent something?)
 - Can you find evidence of onomatopoeia, assonance or alliteration? How do they give momentum to the poetry when read aloud?
 - Thematic concerns and reader response
 - What themes can you identify?
 - What emotions are evoked by the poem? How is this achieved?
150. *'To grow old as a woman in Western society is to become devalued.'* (p. 177) Do you agree – why/why not?
151. *It's a given that women over fifty are socially invisible. On the net you can find any number of articles attesting to this.* (p. 177) What do you think the author means by 'socially invisible'? What might be the effect on an individual who no longer feels 'visible'?
152. *To be 'savagely unimpressed' – now, that seems something admirable for an invisible woman to aspire to.* (p. 178) What do you think the author means by 'savagely unimpressed'?
153. What are 'Red-Hatters'? (p. 178) What are the reasons women give for favouring or criticising this group?
154. *The sense of possibility in the midst of our always-becoming selves is the ultimate source of all hope, and of all creativity.* (p. 186) What do you think is meant by 'our always-becoming selves'? Do you think this is the ultimate source of hope and creativity – why/why not?

155. *What is it I am becoming? I think it's okay not to know. Perhaps the point is that we don't.* (p. 186) What is it that you, personally, are becoming at this point in your life? Write a response that only you will see.

LITERACY: COMPOSING TEXTS THROUGH SPEAKING, WRITING AND CREATING

Written comprehension activities

Comprehension questions can be adapted from the discussion points above. Have students write paragraph answers supporting their claims with quotes from the text.

Creative writing

156. Contribute a piece of memoir or a personal essay inspired by the colour ... [insert colour of your choice].
157. What is your favourite colour? Brainstorm a list of things you associate with this colour. Research the history of the colour. Write a creative piece (free verse poem and/or short story of 2000-300 words) inspired by this colour.
158. Create a poem in any form of your choice (acrostic, ballad, cinquain, haiku, blank verse, limerick, ode, free-verse, sonnet etc.) inspired by the colour purple.
159. What is synaesthesia? (p. 90) Write a short story from the point of view of a narrator who is a synesthete – how might their descriptions of the world differ from the mainstream?
160. Write a fictional short story about a scenario, *'when the world goes back to bows and arrows, when everything breaks down.'* (p. 82)
161. Continue the story: use this excerpt as the opening to create a work of fiction of 2000-3000 words: *It was a face made of linen with eye-holes and a mouth. We took turns in it running crazily around the garden, but there was already something about the mask that made me wary, some itch or inexplicable periphery that it announced.* (p. 97)
162. Write a short story inspired by the theme 'karma'. (p. 137)
163. Write a short story words entitled 'Truth is stranger than fiction'. (p. 160)
164. *Begum Rokeya Hossain, more than a hundred years ago, created her own utopian vision in her 1905 satire Sultana's Dream. In a country called Ladyland women run the country: women are the politicians, the scientists, the soldiers and the traders. Where are the men?* (p. 172) Write a short story depicting your own utopian vision of the world.
165. Create a free verse poem or short story exploring one or more of the following themes: gender, feminism, personal identity, transformation, family, discrimination, memory, childhood, ageing, nostalgia.
166. Write a critical review of *Purple Prose* for your school newspaper. What, in your opinion, were the strengths and the weaknesses of the collection? To which readership/s would you recommend the book and why?
167. Write an alternative blurb for *Purple Prose*.

Debate

168. In teams of three, have students debate for/against the validity of the following claims:
- Men cannot identify as feminists.
 - Swearing reflects negatively on one's character. (p. 43)
 - Gender is socially and culturally ascribed, whereas sex relates to the anatomical body one is born with. (p. 18)
 - Gender is one of the primary labels we attach to people. (p. 18)
 - Pigeon racing is an inhumane sport. (p. 81)
 - The creative artist is the root of all change in society. (p. 145)
 - AFL is a man's game. (p. 117)
 - 'Chic flicks' cannot be labelled feminist films. (p. 169)
 - 'Memory, too, is part imagination, each memory a recreation rather than a reproduction. (p. 62)

Suggested essay questions

The following questions can be adapted for in-class assessment or used for a take-home research essay.

169. Compare and contrast the portrayals of feminism in any two essays within *Purple Prose* – do these essays challenge or reinforce traditional gender stereotypes?
170. How is Australian culture/identity portrayed in one or more essays within *Purple Prose*?
171. Critically analyse the representation of no more than three of the following themes within any two essays from *Purple Prose* – gender, feminism, personal identity, transformation, family, discrimination, memory, childhood, ageing, nostalgia.
172. How does the theme of 'metamorphosis' connect the various individual pieces within *Purple Prose*?

Oral Presentation topics

173. Create a three-minute presentation discussing the representation of one of the following themes from *Purple Prose*: gender, feminism, identity, family, discrimination, memory, childhood, ageing, nostalgia.

Skills to revise in creating texts (through study of *Purple Prose*)

- Model appropriate planning and drafting strategies, including underlining and highlighting key words in an essay question, and analysing the 'directive words' that instruct you how to answer the question (e.g. evaluate, compare and contrast, critically discuss etc.).
- Provide an essay-planning template. Revise how to structure an effective proposition.
- Use the text as stimulus for teaching a number of points on spelling and grammar to improve students' ability to effectively proofread their own work.

Skills to revise in interpreting, analysing, evaluating texts (through study of *Purple Prose*)

- Set small reading activities to encourage students to practise a variety of reading strategies. For example: skimming through a page to find a relevant quote.
- Set comprehension tasks requiring the students to justify their response with appropriate evidence from the text or their wider reading and viewing.
- Set compare-and-contrast activities to encourage students to make connections between the text and their wider reading and viewing.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

174. *I became redder and redder: jackets, scarves, boots, my auto 'Eric the Red' and more importantly a way of looking at the world that crossed borders of race and ethnicity. Social Justice was the rallying cry for the red posse I rode with.* (p. 168)
- a. Create a definition for the term 'social justice'.
 - b. What social justice issues are students particularly passionate about? Why?
 - c. Invite students to work in pairs to create a PowerPoint presentation on a social justice issue of their choice. They should then present this to their class and/or community. The presentation should outline how people can become involved in combating the issue.
175. Create a Book Trailer using iMovie/Windows Movie Maker: students can create a storyboard and advertisement for *Purple Prose*.
- a. Source copyright free images at: <http://www.imagebase.net/>
 - b. Source creative commons licensed music at: <https://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos>

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

'Health literacy can be understood as an individual's ability to gain access to, understand and use health information and services in ways that promote and maintain health and wellbeing.' – The Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education Rationale

176. In conjunction with reading *Purple Prose*, have students complete a unit on mental health using websites such as <http://www.youthbeyondblue.com/>
177. Have them create a list of positive coping strategies and resources for young people suffering

from depression and/or anxiety:

<http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources/schools-and-universities/secondary-schools-and-tertiary/senseability/overview-of-senseability>

THE ARTS

178. Invite students to create an artwork of their choice inspired by the colour purple. They may use any medium, or indeed a combination of mediums, that they like (photography, film, music, dance, paint, sculpture, cartooning, graffiti art, mixed-media art, print, illustration etc.). Hold a class or community exhibition.
179. *I have a love of colour, in clothing, hair and nail colour, favouring bright, clashing colours, choosing them for the ways the juxtaposing colours assault my eyes. Peacock blue with clashing pink, blue and green should never be seen, stripes with florals, hair dyed flame red, fingernails painted the colour of spring grass. Aunt told me I dressed like a blind woman, not meaning it as the compliment for which I took it.* (p. 84)
 - a. What colours and patterns do you love and why?
 - b. How would you describe your personal fashion sense? What kinds of clothes and shoes do you like? Who are your fashion icons? Turn to a partner and share.
 - c. Fashion/art project: design and create an outfit or artwork (painting, sculpture, textile etc.) inspired by the theme: 'juxtaposing colours that assault the eye'. (p. 189)
180. What was the Impressionist Revolution? (p. 144) What were the impressionists trying to capture? (p. 141)
 - a. List some famous Australian impressionists – what did they contribute to the movement?
 - b. View artwork by John Russell. (p. 139)
181. Who were the Pre-Raphaelites? Compare and contrast Pre-Raphaelite artwork with Impressionist artwork – what makes each movement unique? Do the two movements have anything in common?
182. *Oils were layered in thick, deft strokes of broken hue to meet the moment, with no attempt to conceal brushwork. The results were considered shocking, and the artists often condemned as careless, puerile or mad.* (p. 145) What kinds of art are you drawn to? (i.e. realistic, abstract, absurdist etc.) Why? Turn to a partner and share.

HISTORY

183. *I have always admired disobedient women in history, literature and real life...Clara Z, Rosa Luxemburg, Begum Rokeya, Emmeline Pankhurst and the English suffragettes, the New York garment workers, Simone de Beauvoir, Scheherazade, Madame Bovary, Marie Curie, Miles Franklin, Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinem, Lena Horne, Nina Simone, Ingrid Bergman, Katharine Susannah Prichard.* (p. 172) Research and write a biography of one of these women. How do they embody the label of the 'disobedient woman'? What are the effects (positive or negative) of thinking about women in this way?
184. *Purple Prose* lends itself to the study of various historical topics pertaining to individual essays, as well as some, such as the suffrage movement, which connect all of the pieces. These include for example:
 - a. The history of the ancient Phoenician civilisation and the Purple Trade Route
 - b. The history of female participation in AFL
 - c. The history of pigeon racing and the role of pigeons in WWI