

PARADISE (POINT OF TRANSMISSION)

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YEAR LEVEL: Y10–12+

ABOUT THE BOOK

Paradise (point of transmission) is a collection of poems that place themselves within a sequence of physical and psychic transitional spaces: from seronegative to seropositive; from ‘adopted’ Singaporean to the poet finding his place again as an adult in the Perth of his childhood; and from being secretive about his HIV-status (in which the art he produced was rooted in the trauma of HIV transmission without naming it), towards living a more public life, in which continuous or persistent living-with-HIV is characterised by Queer modalities of intimacy, yearning and transformation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Sutherland (he/him) is a Queer poz (PLHIV) writer and performance-maker creating work between Boorloo, Western Australia and Singapore. His work draws upon intercultural and Queer critical theories, and the viral instabilities of identity, pop culture and the autobiographical self. As a performance-maker, he has twice been awarded WA’s Blaz Award for New Writing and makes up one half of independent theatre outfit Squid Vicious (@squidvicioustheatre). His recent performance works include *Salome delta*, *30 Day Free Trial*, *Poorly Drawn Shark*, *Jiangshi*, *Unveiling: Gay Sex for Endtimes* and *a line could be crossed and you would slowly cease to be*, which was commissioned by Singapore’s Intercultural Theatre Institute in 2019. As a poet, he was awarded *Overland’s* Fair Australia Poetry Prize 2017, was the runner-up in the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize 2022, and placed third in FAWWA’s Tom Collins Prize 2021. His poetry, fiction and non-fiction can be found in a raft of national and international literary journals and anthologies, including *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Westerly*, *Portside Review*, 聲韻詩刊 *Voice & Verse*, *EXHALE: An Anthology of Queer Voices from Singapore*, and Margaret River Press’s *We’ll Stand in That Place and Other Stories*, having been shortlisted for their 2019 Short Story Prize. He is grateful to reside on Whadjuk Noongar boodja.

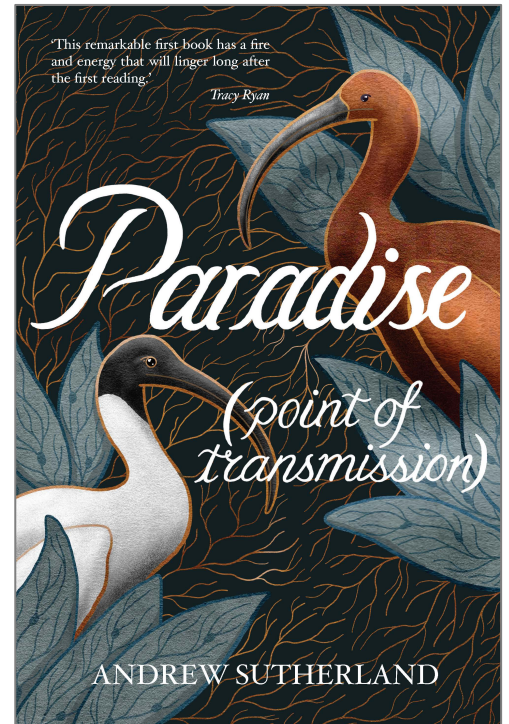
THEMES

- Society and Culture
- Stigma and Discrimination
- Stereotypes
- Queer Identity
- HIV/AIDS
- Sexuality
- Belonging

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- Year 10–12+ English, Literature (GENERAL and ATAR).

This teaching resource was written with students in Years 10 to 12 in mind. Poems in this collection can be read as standalone pieces, however, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the poems if they are read within the context of the whole collection.



CURRICULUM MAPPING

Poetry, Australian Literature, Cultural, Social and Gender Perspectives (English).

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Critical and creative thinking, personal and social literacy, intercultural understanding, ethics, ICT.

USEFUL WEBSITES

- twitter.com/sutherlandrei

CLASSROOM IDEAS

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Socio-Cultural Context

When the HIV/AIDS epidemic emerged in the early 1980s, there was much fear and panic about what was then a little-known disease. In 1982, American scientists called the disease GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency) when cases appeared among gay men in California. When the disease appeared in other populations, including heterosexual women – both in the US and around the world – the name changed to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). AIDS is used to describe the set of fatal symptoms caused by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection. Although antiretroviral drugs were developed in the late 1980s, it was not until the mid-1990s that a successful combination drug therapy became available to people living with HIV (PLHIV) – at least to those living in more affluent countries.

There are still millions of people around the world living with HIV who are not yet on treatment, and for whom HIV remains a terminal disease. But in Australia and other high socio-economic countries, HIV is now treated as a chronic condition. Despite the advances made in the last 40 years, however, HIV shame and discrimination persist because of the misinformation that continues to circulate about PLHIV. The lack of knowledge and fear of contracting HIV, individual values, beliefs and sociocultural norms are some of the factors contributing to ongoing stigma.

There are also migration laws across the world that control or restrict the movement and travel of PLHIV. Many countries in the world restrict PLHIV from entering, or from holding long-term residence. Information on this can be found on hivtravel.org.

A glossary of terms has not been provided as the author encourages interested readers to engage with non-government organisations related to HIV/AIDS advocacy.

NAPWHA: napwha.org.au

WAAC: waac.com.au

Action for Aids: afa.org.sg

HIV/AIDS Legal Centre: halc.org.au

Suggested Reading Activities

- In small groups and then as a class, after examining the contents page, discuss the title *Paradise (point of transmission)*.
- Research and discuss current understandings of HIV.
- Predict and list what themes you might expect to find in this book.
- Read the author's 'About the poems' statement and compare this to your predictions list.
- Ask students to select five poems from the book that they most engaged with. In pairs or small groups, they should decide on a final list of five of the poems and list the reasons why these poems made the final list.

The following is a starting list of some terms students will need in order to talk or write about poetry:

- *Genre*
- *Poetic persona / poetic voice*
- *Stanza*
- *Poetic form*

- *Metre*
- *Rhyme*
- *Free verse*
- *Enjambement*
- *Imagery*
- *Metaphor, simile*
- *Personification*
- *Sound devices – alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia*
- *Cliché*
- *Voice*
- *Style*
- *Tone*
- *Irony*
- *Allusion*
- *Repetition*
- *Paradox*
- *Oxymoron*
- *Parody*
- *Black humour*
- *Caricature*
- *Satire*

How to introduce critical and close reading of a poem to students unfamiliar with the process:

1. Read the poem a few times to gain a sense of meaning, language, narrative, point of view, rhyme and rhythm.
2. Who is the speaker in the poem?
3. What is the subject of the poem and the speaker's attitude towards this subject?
4. Language in poetry is often ambiguous, and the reader has to pay close attention and also 'read between the lines'. Readers can ask: what ideas is the poet wanting readers to engage with? Does it connect to anything in their own world?
5. Clarify words and phrases. What images and sounds is the poet trying to evoke?
6. Identify and clarify the intertextual references.
7. Identify poetic devices used in the piece.
8. Pay attention to the physical layout of the poem on the page. How does this contribute to meaning?
9. Identify and clarify the intertextual references. Look up the ones that you are not familiar with.
10. Pay attention to the physical layout of the poem on the page. How does this contribute to meaning?
11. How would you describe this poet's voice and style?

Themes

- Develop a working definition for the word 'theme'.
- Pay attention to how the collection has been structured and note the themes in each of the three sections: (narrative), (metaphor) and (paradise).
- Make a list of the recurrent themes and compare this list to the one you made earlier in your pre-reading prediction activity.
- In pairs or small groups compare lists and write a paragraph summarising the themes of this collection.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT TASKS

The following tasks can be adapted for use for Year 10, GENERAL and ATAR English and Literature classrooms.

1A

Creating and Collating a Poetry Anthology:

(Teachers to decide whether this is to be an individual or small group activity)

- Student selects at least two poems from *Paradise (point of transmission)* that are similar in some way, e.g. they might share the same theme, mood, setting, voice, form, etc.

- Search for at least one other poem by another poet that shares the same thing.
- Create at least two of your own poems that will fit within the micro collection.
- Compile the collection.
- Create a cover and title.
- Present the collection either in hard copy or an online format. You may want to consider recording the poems as spoken word.

1B

Write a 500-word rationale explaining your creative decisions, i.e. explain what unifies your collection, why you have chosen a specific theme or style, and how your own work is positioned within the collection.

2A

Transform a poem from *Paradise (point of transmission)* into audio-visual text, one which captures the mood, tone and voice of the poem, using appropriate images. A voice recording of the poem must be evident. Teachers may stipulate for students not to include the full text of the poem.

2B

Write a 500-word rationale explaining your creative decisions, i.e. explain choice of images, background music, tone of voice, sound effects, etc.

3

Teachers may choose to create a panel discussion in which students demonstrate their understanding of the key concepts and themes, or the application of these to the role of poetry in the students' own lives. Panel discussions do not necessarily have to be a formal assessment task but can be an opportunity for students to reinforce and synthesise knowledge and skills gained from other lessons. These ideas can also be adapted for essay questions as required.

Ideas for panel discussion:

- *Paradise (point of transmission)* is an example of how poetry has both transformative value for its creator and value as a social record.
- Explore how Sutherland's use of intertextuality or allusion in the poems 'in season 2 episode 17 of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Ms Calendar tries to restore Angel's soul' and 'Judith and her unnamed attendant behead Holofernes in his bed' has mediated your response to his work. [Students may wish to choose poems that make references to texts they are more familiar with.]
- Discuss how poetry can be an act of empowerment and/or rebellion, with close reference to these two poems.
- Explain how Sutherland has used imagery to enrich your understanding of his experiences and the general human condition. Make detailed references to at least one of the poems in the collection.
- Examine how history and memory shapes current attitudes towards those currently living with HIV with reference to 'AIDS Play 1991' and 'Ancestor Poem' (or two poems of your own choosing).
- How does reading Sutherland's introductory statement, 'About the poems', and his essay 'Writing Illness, Writing Time' (margaretriverpress.com/2020/05/26/writing-illness-writing-time) influence or shape your understanding of the poems in this collection?
- Read 'Leak' and 'here is what we have between us' and discuss how these poems speak of the relationship between the body to the state and to cultural citizenship.
- Explain how your understanding of HIV/AIDS has changed as a result of reading this collection. Refer to at least two poems in the collection and how the author has used poetic techniques to construct meaning.

RESOURCES

Below are additional resources that may assist in facilitating classroom discussions and support reading activities.

- Reflecting back on the AIDS epidemic and the great advances in science
- [ABC Australia 2021], [youtube.com/watch?v=L9A2TVekRYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9A2TVekRYY)
- World Health Organization, [who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/hiv/strategic-information/hiv-data-and-statistics](https://www.who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/hiv/strategic-information/hiv-data-and-statistics)

- 'The AIDS mystery', (Audio Only) [60 Minutes Australia, 1983] [youtube.com/watch?v=_Zvn67BW0FI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Zvn67BW0FI)
- Rock Hudson [One of the first celebrities to disclose his HIV/AIDS status], [voanews.com/a/rock-hudson-hollywoods-quintessential-leading-man-admits-aids-in-1985/3958026.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/rock-hudson-hollywoods-quintessential-leading-man-admits-aids-in-1985/3958026.html)
- The Grim Reaper TV Advertisement [1987], youtu.be/mSmaWEK_rD4
- Magic Johnson Interview [2021], [theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/24/magic-johnson-the-nba-superstar-who-smashed-hiv-stigma-then-built-a-huge-fortune](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/24/magic-johnson-the-nba-superstar-who-smashed-hiv-stigma-then-built-a-huge-fortune)
- Possible Cure of HIV [2022], news.weill.cornell.edu/news/2022/02/patient-possibly-cured-of-hiv-infection-by-special-stem-cell-transplant
- 'How to dramatise a plague' [Representation of HIV/AIDS in film], [bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/features/aids-on-screen-brief-history](https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/features/aids-on-screen-brief-history)