

VOCIFERATE | 詠

EMILY SUN

ISBN (PB): 9781760990220

YEAR LEVEL: Years 10-12+

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Asia and Australia's
Engagement with Asia

ABOUT THE BOOK

Vociferate | 詠 is West Australian writer Emily Sun's debut poetry collection. Alice Pung has described the book as 'polemical, personal and political' – in it, Emily meditates upon a range of issues that have shaped her world. Emily was born in British colonial Hong Kong to stateless diasporic-Chinese parents, who are descendants of Chinese sojourners to South-East Asian countries. Emily moved to England at age three before immigrating to Perth with her family.

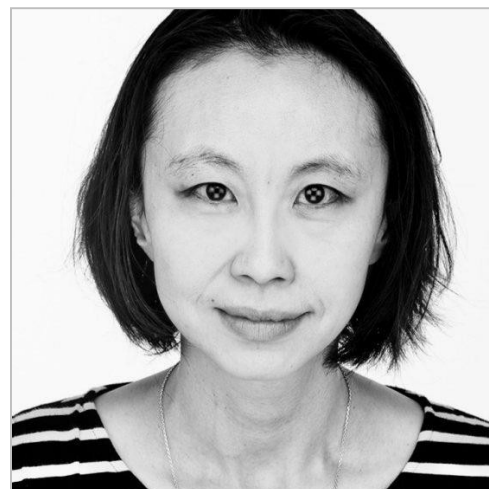
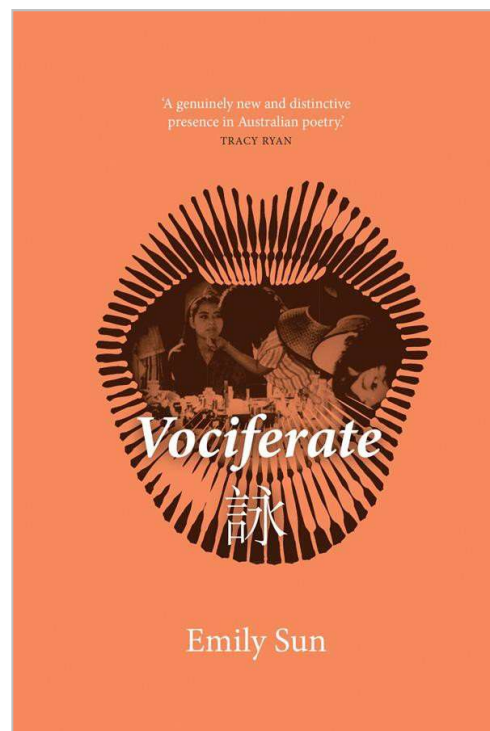
The poems in this book examine issues of belonging, cultural heritage, individual and national identities, the legacy of colonial rule, as well as more personal subjects such as intimate and social relationships. Emily has said that this book is an expression of her 'minor feelings', a term popularised by American writer Cathy Park Hong to describe the ineffable emotions experienced by minority groups.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Sun was born in Hong Kong, moved to England at age three, and at eight years old immigrated with her family to Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar (Perth, Western Australia). Emily's poetry and prose have been published in various journals and anthologies including *Meanjin*, *Growing Up Asian in Australia*, *Cordite Poetry Review* and *Australian Poetry Journal*. *Vociferate* | 詠 is her debut poetry collection.

THEMES

- History
- Stereotypes
- Patriarchy
- Feminism
- Belonging
- Identity
- Multiculturalism
- Cultural identity
- Relationships
- Australian history
- Asian history
- War
- Migration
- National identity
- Class
- Culture
- Minor feelings
- Postcolonialism
- Colonialism



AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Although this teaching resource was written with students in Years 10 to 12 in mind, there are poems in this collection that are accessible to younger readers.

West Australian teachers of Year 11 Literature ATAR can refer to literary texts outside the prescribed list as long as the text chosen assists in the teaching and learning of the course content and students are aware that the text is not on the Year 12 Literature ATAR list. *Vociferate* | 詠 is a new work and as such is not yet on the prescribed list.

For teachers outside Western Australia who wish to use this book as a Year 11 or 12 Literature ATAR text, please confer with the curriculum board in your jurisdiction.

Curriculum Mapping: Poetry; Australian Literature; Cultural, Social and Gender Perspectives

General Capabilities: Critical and creative thinking, personal and social, literacy, intercultural understanding, ethics, ICT

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: iamemilysun.com
- Author's Instagram: [instagram.com/i.am.emily.sun](https://www.instagram.com/i.am.emily.sun)

CLASSROOM IDEAS

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Exploring poetry

1. Create a list of poems you have read or that you like. You can include songs you believe hold up as poems, as well as Insta-poetry.
2. In pairs, compare your lists and identify any common features of at least two works from your respective lists.
3. What poetic or literary techniques are used in these works? Do the pieces in your partner's list conform to your expectations of what a poem is? What are some of the themes that the works on your lists explore?
4. In what ways does poetry differ from prose or drama? What commonalities do they share?

Free verse

1. Brainstorm the key features of free verse. How does it differ from blank or form verse?

Making predictions

1. Use the cover image to make predictions about the book (visual literacy).
2. Discuss the title *Vociferate* and 詠 (definitions and transliteration for Chinese characters are provided in the book, but some students may want to use a translation app, such as Google Translate).
3. Examine the epigraph by Edward Said at the beginning of the book and read the first poem, 'Origins', on p. 10. In pairs, make a list of predictions about what themes you might expect to find in this book.

READING *VOCIFERATE* | 詠

Textual analysis

The following is a starting list of terms you will need in order to talk or write about poetry in your assessments.

- Genre
- Poetic persona / poetic voice
- Stanza
- Poetic form
- Metre
- Rhyme
- Free verse
- Enjambement
- Image
- Metaphor
- Cliché
- Voice
- Style
- Tone
- Irony
- Allusion
- Repetition
- Paradox
- Oxymoron
- Parody
- Black humour
- Caricature

Although each poem can be read as a standalone piece, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the poems if they are read within the context of the whole collection.

Below is a general guide on 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. Clarify words and phrases. What images and sounds is the poet trying to evoke?
3. Identify and clarify the intertextual references.
4. Pay attention to the poetic devices used in the piece.
5. Pay attention to the physical layout of the poem on the page. How does this contribute to meaning?
6. Poetry is often ambiguous, and the reader has to pay close attention and '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?

Themes

1. In pairs or small groups, develop a working definition for the word 'theme'.
2. Brainstorm the themes of the collection.
3. Make a list of the most recurrent themes.

Identity and Belonging

Many of the poems in this collection explore both individual and collective identities, and how these have been shaped by history. The following resources and activities will support student reading and analysis.

One of the key ideas in the poems in the collection is that identity is dependent upon situated contexts. Introduce to the class the notion of multiple identities and how this is dependent upon time and place, and social, historical and cultural contexts.

Think, Pair, Share

1. Think back to when you were in Year 2. What was important to you back then?
 - people or group
 - activity
 - place
 - objects
2. In pairs, compare your lists and focus on the similarities and differences. What role do factors such as where you grew up, your guardians' occupations, your family's cultural heritage and religion play in accounting for these similarities and differences?
3. After sharing, go back to the first task and list what is important to you now. Compare this list to your previous one.
4. In small groups, share with each other how you have changed over time and compare the similarities and differences within your group, then reflect upon how sociocultural factors, family or broader history has affected these identities.

Intertextuality

The poems in *Vociferate* | 詠 refer not only to other cultural texts but also to events in history.

1. Identify references to world events or other cultural texts and phenomena.
2. Create a timeline from 1980 to 2020 and place the references you have identified into the timeline. Some references may be from before 1980.

Additional Resources for Textual Analysis

- Close Reading – University of Wisconsin – Madison writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/closerreading
- Feminist Theory – Purdue University owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/feminist_criticism.html
- Postcolonial Theory – Purdue University owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/post_colonial_criticism.html
- Analysis of Orientalism – Literariness literariness.org/2020/11/10/analysis-of-edward-saids-orientalism

Suggested Assessment Tasks

The following tasks can be adapted for use in higher or lower year groups.

1A

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

1. Select at least two poems from *Vociferate* | 詠 that are similar in some way, e.g. they might share the same theme, mood, setting, voice, form, etc.
2. Search for at least one other poem by another poet that shares the same element.
3. Create at least two of your own poems that will fit within the micro-collection.
4. Compile the collection.
5. Create a cover and title.
6. Present the collection either in hard copy or in 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 *Vociferate* | 詠 into audiovisual text 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:

1. Some poems in *Vociferate* | 詠 have been described as wryly humorous. How would you describe the humour in the poems such as 'National Treasures Coming Home' or 'Culinary Interpretations'? Is humour universal or is it culturally specific?
2. In 'Orientalist Me', the poet comments on the orientalist tropes used in Hollywood films, whereas in the poem 'Double Exotic 囍', the poet both is exoticised by and exoticises a European man. What are the dangers, if any, of reinforcing cultural stereotypes in these two contexts? Use other examples where stereotypes of a person's cultural heritage have been used for benign or belligerent effect to support your argument. You may draw upon examples from other cultural texts and past or current events.
3. A poem is a conversation with a reader. What is the role of the reader when reading a poem? Select a couple of poems from the collection to discuss how reading poetry can be an active or passive experience.
4. Poetry is political; a poet can be an activist. Discuss how rhetoric and imagery in this collection lets the reader know that the poet is taking a particular stand. How useful are poems in opening our eyes to different subject positions? What is the effect of a poem that makes us feel uncomfortable?

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