

How Can We Read When Our Beds Are Burning?

**The Urgency of Climate Catastrophe and
the Importance of Teaching English**

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- Icons of Urgency
- Deep Time Management
 - ‘tolerance of ambiguity’
 - ‘scale’
 - ‘shifting baselines’
- Time’s up!
 - *Desecration Phrasebooks*
- Conclusion: The Imperative of Hope

...but first: The Problem with Literacy

Climate literacy

aims at ‘students’ conceptualization of global warming and climate change, such that they become **informed decision makers**’ (Shepardson et al. 2017, ix; see also Hufnagel 2017, 43)

...but first: The Problem with Literacy

Climate science literacy

understanding essential principles of Earth's climate system, assessment of scientific information; meaningful communication about climate change; **making informed and responsible decisions** with regard to actions that may affect climate (cf. US Global Research Program 2009, *Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Science*)

...but first: The Problem with Literacy

Sustainability Literacy

defined as ‘[t]he ability to **take steps towards building a more sustainable self and society**’ and interested in ‘skills, attitudes, competencies, dispositions and values that are necessary for surviving and thriving in the declining conditions of the world in ways which slow down that decline as far as possible’ (Stibbe and Luna 10)

Climate, Time, and a ‘Wicked Problem’

‘The notion of wicked problems is an approach to understanding the dynamics of a major proposed change with multiple and conflicting inputs and multiple possible outcomes, all of which play over time against, or occasionally with, each other. Wicked problems occur at the interface of human /environmental interaction and are characterized by the fact that solutions create a ‘plethora of new problems’ (Sun/Yang 2016, n.p.)

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Climate, Time, and a ‘Wicked Problem’

‘There is no space together in urgency, and so wicked problems call for something other than urgency. Wicked problems require space to think, space for multiple-centered actants to consider the diverse ways in which we view the world’s complexities’. (Bauman/O’Brien 2020, 28)

- Icons of Urgency

climate change *or*
global warming *or*
climate crisis *or...?*

- Icons of Urgency
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- Tolerance of ambiguity: literature must not be seen ‘as evidence for or against [scientific explanations], but rather as dramatization of the cultural processes by which climate change becomes cognitively and emotionally legible’ (Garrard 2017, 122)

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 - ‘scale’

T. Clark: Derangement of Scales (2015)

Scale 1

- individual

Scale 2

- communal
- National
- anthropocentric

Scale 3

- global
- ecological

T. Clark: Derangement of Scales

‘The larger the scale, the more thing-like becomes the significance of the person registered on it [...]. Plots, characters, setting and trivia that seemed normal and harmless on the personal or national scale reappear as destructive doubles of themselves on the third scale [that is, the planetary, transnational one]’. (161)

‘These views [...] do not supersede one another. One cannot put them along a continuum of progress. No one view is rendered invalid by the presence of others. They are simply disjunctive.’ (Chakrabarty 2012, 2)



transcultural (re)reading

Scale 1

- individual

Scale 2

- communal
- National
- anthropocentric

Scale 3

- global
- ecological

e.g. Simon Marsden and Shaun Tan's *The Rabbits*

animal characters? (s1)

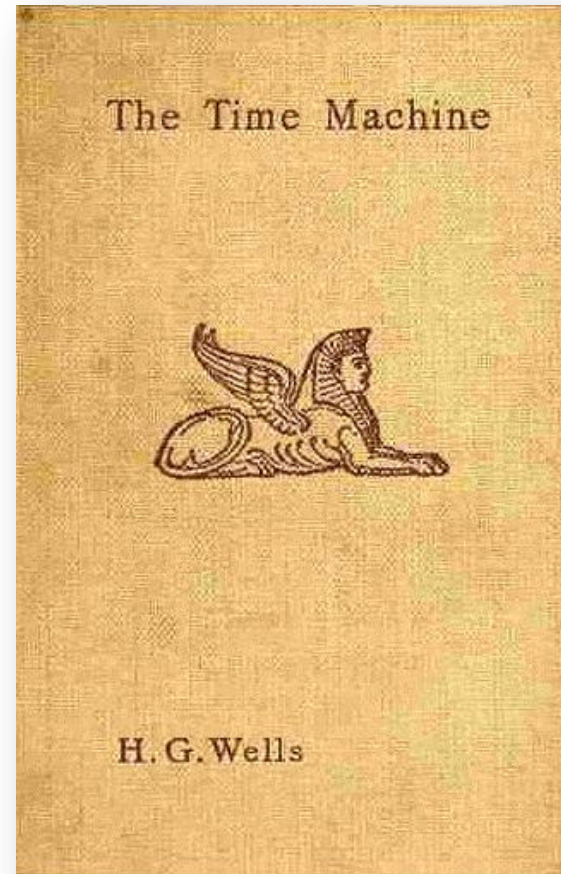
postcolonial allegory? (s2)

ecological fable? (s3)



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Time's Up! Creative and collaborative Task Design

- Desecration Phrasebook: ‘a lexicon recording the particularities of the environments and phenomena that our actions as a species are bringing into being. It would gather terms that describe a heavily harnessed or drastically deranged “nature”: a “Desecration Phrasebook”, as it were. **Is there a word yet for the post-natural rain that falls when a cloud is rocket-seeded with silver iodide? Or an island newly revealed by the melting of sea ice in the North-West Passage? Or the glistening tidemarks left on coastlines by oil spills?**’ (Macfarlane 2019)
- Cf. Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris’s *The Lost Words*

- **Conclusion: The Imperative of Hope**

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