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All the Nines: Creativity in English Curricula in England in 1919, 1989 and 2019 as a Reflection of Britain's Place in Europe

Journal:	<i>Changing English</i>
Manuscript ID	CCEN-2019-0052.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	English, hermeneutic, creativity, national curriculum, policy, history, international, Europe
Abstract:	<p>Just after the First World War was published <i>The Teaching of English in Schools</i> (English Association, 1919). The proceedings of a large conference, it argues that developing the 'creative spirit' (1919: 30) is fundamental both for the growth of 'the true self of the child' (ibid) and to maintain peace in Europe.</p> <p>Seventy years later, the first National Curriculum (Cox, 1989) positions English firmly 'in a European context' (1989: 58). It promotes an English education where creative approaches support the development of knowledge and skills, facility with and enjoyment of language, empathy and understanding.</p> <p>In contrast, today's national curriculum (sic) (QCA, 2014) contains no reference to the role of English in international relations; simultaneously, all references to creativity have disappeared.</p> <p>As Britain struggles to cope with the fallout from Brexit, this paper discusses the correlation between how each document positions English in an international context and how they value creativity. Written from a hermeneutic standpoint, it presents each document in its political context. Without wishing to over-simplify complex issues, it questions how far the curriculum echoes national politics. It calls for a new curriculum that embraces a creative, internationalist view of English to shape communities of the future.</p>

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	1919	1989	2019
International political context	Post-World War I, the need to maintain the peace is of primary importance, alongside development of trade	Britain is newly committed to the EU yet aware GDP is lower than key European and global competitors	GDP remains low relative to key competitors; Britain's PISA scores have flatlined
Contemporary model of creativity	Humanist, child-centred, promotes personal growth	Humanist, child-centred, promotes personal growth	Collaborative, skills-based, problem-solving, outcomes-focused
English pedagogy	<u>The Teaching of English in Schools</u> (English Association, 1919) English presented as a peacekeeping force; encourages experimentation with talk, choice of reading, imaginative writing; specific reference to international languages and literatures	<u>English for Ages 5-16</u> (Cox, 1989) English presented as a bridge to international relations and successful commerce; encourages learning of language, literature and the aesthetic through active learning; specific reference to international languages and literatures	<u>National curriculum in England</u> (DfE, 2014) English presented as a defined body of knowledge essential for examinations and economic success; no explicit reference to international context; international literature excluded from GCSE examinations

Fig 1: Summary table