



INSIGHT

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Enlightenment

U3A Bunbury Inc.

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NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE, BUNBURY. W.A.

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How do flowers know it's spring? A botanist explains

Gregory Moore, Senior Research Associate, School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences, The University of Melbourne

For many plants, Spring is a really good time. They have endured a cold, dark, hard Winter, which can be tough for plants. It makes sense that when Spring comes around, plants are ready to take advantage of warmer temperatures, longer days and more sunshine. They resume growth after their Winter dormancies and many rapidly produce flowers. You've probably been spotting the explosion of flowers everywhere on your neighbourhood walks, your commute or in your own garden. Why exactly do flowers go crazy in Spring, and how do they know exactly when to show?



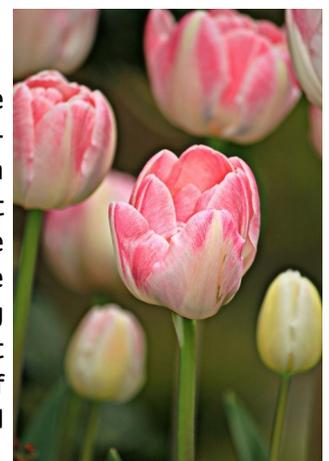
Here's the science!

Letting loose in a big rush

For many plants, the conditions for growth in Spring are close to ideal. Water, warmth and sunlight are suddenly readily available. Plants don't have to hold back anymore. They can resume almost unconstrained growth and have the energy and resources to invest in flowering. Your garden (or a patch of natural bush) is, in fact, a highly competitive environment. Plants will rush to produce masses of flowers in the hope this will give individual plants an advantage in the reproductive race that ultimately might lead to seed and reproduction. This, after all, is the universal goal of biological success. There is another factor, however, that also influences spring flowering.

The birds and the bees (and other insects)

Flowering plants (known as angiosperms) are relatively recent arrivals on the evolutionary time line. They first became significant during the Cretaceous Period, about 100 to 120 million years ago. By then, insects had already been on the scene and evolving for millions of years. Birds had evolved more or less at the same time as these flowering plants, becoming more common during the Cretaceous Period too, but a few million years earlier. These creatures, the plants noticed, were excellent at dispersing pollen and seeds. Many flowering plants evolved to use their helpful services. Before the angiosperms, ancient plants used spores for reproduction. Conifers, which had evolved hundreds of millions of years before angiosperms, used wind to disperse their pollen. Seed dispersal was often limited, unreliable and slow.



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Flowering plants needed to attract pollinators and seed dispersal vectors, such as insects and birds. Many developed flashy and showy flowers: the epitome of good advertising. So flowering in Spring coincides with the return of migratory birds and the life cycles of insects (insect activity usually declines over Winter). It makes great sense that many plants flower when the insects and birds so vital to their reproductive success are also getting active (and getting busy). It is a matter of great timing that benefits all involved.

Perfect timing

Timing is everything. The way flowering plants time their flowering is superb biology. Many people assume warmer temperatures trigger Spring flowering. But temperature is renowned for its variability and unpredictability. Temperature is not a good indicator of season or time. So most plants measure day length using a green pigment called phytochrome (literally plant colour). This exists in two forms, one of which is active in triggering plant metabolism. This enables plants to measure, with remarkable accuracy, both day length (also known as photoperiod) and the night length. The ratio of the two forms allows plants to measure time like a biological clock. Photoperiod is a very accurate and reliable measure of time and season and so plants nearly always get their flowering times in Spring right.

In some plants there is an extra feature that can affect flowering, where the plants produce an inhibitor (abscisic acid) before Winter that keeps them dormant. Abscisic acid is cold-sensitive. So when Spring comes, the inhibitor level is low. This, combined with photoperiod, helps initiate flowering. The two mechanisms combined are a very reliable and consistent trigger for flowering.

Advantages to being a flower in Spring

Flowering in Spring means plants can use insects and birds to facilitate pollination and disperse seeds. The pollen can be spread effectively and in a targeted way to other flowers of the same species. Less valuable pollen is wasted than if you're relying on wind dispersal. The seed can spread over much greater distances. The seed for many species will germinate during Spring when growth conditions are highly favourable. It's not a coincidence flowering plants with this type of reproductive biology spread around the globe very quickly after their emergence during the Cretaceous Period. They are highly efficient and successful plants. Not everyone can be a flower in spring. So why don't all flowering plants bloom in spring?

It is one of the delights of biology that there is nearly always room for contrarians and exceptions. Some plants flower in Autumn or perhaps during Winter and some in Summer, but there is always advantage in them doing so. Sometimes it's to avoid the fierce competition from all those other Spring flowers in attracting pollinators. Sometimes it's because they are focused on a particular insect or bird vector that another season suits better. Sometimes it's because the plants can only survive in a highly competitive environment by not flowering in Spring.

In the complex web of plant biology, a one-size-fits all approach never works. Spring flowering has a lot going for it – as the current profusion of flowers attests – but many plants have made success of being different.

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TYRIL HOUGHTON, NASA SPACE CAMP 10/07/25

Space Camp Experience: Inspiring the Next Generation

For more than 42 years, Space Camp has played a pivotal role in motivating and inspiring future explorers. This internationally renowned programme, which boasts over 1M alumni, is based on the training given to NASA astronauts and places a strong emphasis on developing teamwork and leadership abilities. Since its inception in 1982, Space Camp has drawn young people from across the United States, and eventually, from around the globe, with attendees representing all 50 states, US territories, and 150 foreign countries.

Space Camp 2012

In July 2012, Tyril's Space Camp was held at the US Space and Rocket Centre. The event began with a parade of nations and included a ceremony to honour national USA teachers of the year. Teachers with their students, from various countries gave presentations, adding an international dimension to the proceedings. The International Space Camp commenced with representatives from ten countries participating in that year's session. In the opening ceremony, countries were called up alphabetically, and Australia was the first team to present. Tyril, along with students Brendan Nicholson and Pi Lee, delivered an engaging presentation that created a welcoming atmosphere for all participants. Each year is unique, and the 2012 event was no exception, with participants starting their days early and going to bed late, fully immersed in the programme. Tyril had expected the programme to offer academic depth in both STEM disciplines and teaching methods. However, whilst some classes did not provide the scientific depth she had anticipated, they did offer a wealth of engaging and innovative ideas. Tyril felt it was a privilege to represent Australia at the camp, especially at a time when Western Australia was waiting on news about whether the Square Kilometre Array project would be located in the Midwest region.

International Participants

Australia	Tyril Houghton (T) Brendan Nicholson (S) Pi Lee (S)	Latvia	Pauls Irbins (T) Annija Korpa (S) Raimonds Muncs (S)
Austria	Sigrid Freinberger (T) Lukas Mayerhofer (S)	Netherlands	Ilse Gabriels (T) Joris Veger (S)
China	Shanshan Gao (T) Dake Shen (S) Shuxin Dong (S)	New Zealand	Conor Hale (S) Callum Brazier (S) Ashlee Parkes (S) Darina Khun (S)
Germany	Philipp Schaffner (S) Teresa Bister (S)	Norway	Tove Astrid Kvarme (T) Muhammad Usman Azeem (S) Abeera Akbar (S)
Greece	Ekaterina Tsikalakis(T) Nikolaos Koukoufilippas (S) Ioanna Kourkoulou (S)	Singapore	Li Hui Mok(T)

Hands-On Activities and Teamwork

Teachers took part in many of the same activities as the students, learning new approaches to bring back to their own classrooms. These activities included building rockets, constructing heat shields, designing Mars landers and toys, and more.



They acted as astronauts in the space shuttle simulator, worked on the International Space Station, and participated in the control room experience. Throughout the week, they attended lectures and presentations by astronauts, authors, and rocket designers—undoubtedly some of the highlights of the camp.



One memorable experience was strapping into the simulator to prepare for weightlessness, followed by a simulated re-entry into Earth's atmosphere. Although the simulation could be disorienting, Tyril stayed determined not to succumb to nausea or faintness. The Flying Fox activity provided a realistic simulation of floating with a parachute and landing in water after re-entry, rounding out an extraordinary learning adventure.





Bringing Back Knowledge to Benefit Students

At Newton Moore Senior High School, which ran the Science Horizons specialist programme for gifted and talented students in the south-west of Western Australia, Tyril saw immense value in attending Space Camp. Her goal was to bring back up-to-date information about science and maths programmes, as well as insights into current scientific applications. That knowledge would not only enhance classroom learning but also support career counselling, helping students aspire to greater heights.



Fostering Scientific Curiosity

With a deep passion for science—particularly as it relates to mathematical competence—Tyril sought to connect scientific concepts with mathematics, especially calculus. Her fascination with space, black holes, quasars, and pulsars had only grown over time. In her role as a talented and gifted coordinator, she arranged for a guest speaker who had worked on the giant telescope in Chile to speak to her students. This initiative significantly boosted enthusiasm among students for pursuing university studies in engineering and physics. The prospect of learning more about NASA programmes was particularly exciting, especially knowing that a former student from her regional high school went on to earn a doctorate in physics and work at NASA—demonstrating that a regional education is no barrier to achievement.



Ric Stacy and the Art of Portraiture

July 25th, 2025

Ric has a background in electrical engineering and drafting, with his early exposure to visual work coming through technical drawing — precise, structured, and analytical. While working in the TAFE system, and on long-service leave (about 20 years ago), he explored artistic pursuits to engage the "right-hand side" of his brain, taking an art class at the local regional gallery, meeting portraitist John Gard. John lived in Dalyellup, at the time, and then moved to Bridgetown. His father was also a notable portraitist. Despite learning painting and drawing, Ric admits he remains analytical — always questioning why certain colours or techniques work. This mindset influenced him learning the piano, taking it up when one of his daughters started, but he focused more on music theory than practice discovering that adjacent piano tones are mathematically separated by the twelfth root of two!! (and we all need to know that, don't we?) Needless to say, his analytical approach wasn't popular with his piano teacher!!

I have found it very hard to summarise Ric's talk, as it was so interesting and detailed, so I have focussed on the paintings he was illustrating, and (with the help of AI), have condensed the wording to the bare minimum. I have kept the original lecture, so if anyone wants the full version, please feel free to ask me for it.....Editor)

Introduction to Portraiture: From Renaissance to Realism

Leonardo da Vinci - Lady with an Ermine

- Painted in the mid-1400s, around the same time as the *Mona Lisa*.
- Commissioned by Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, likely depicting his mistress Cecilia Gallerani.
- The ermine symbolizes the Duke's power and presence; its affectionate pose suggests Cecilia's influence over him.
- Possibly one of the earliest standalone portraits, shifting focus from religious/historical figures to individuals.
- Small and intimate in scale, helping pioneer modern portraiture.



Diego Velázquez - Juan de Pareja

- Born in 1599, apprenticed at 12, became a master painter.
- Known for lifelike realism—figures appear to step out of the canvas.
- Painted his enslaved assistant Juan de Pareja in elegant attire, elevating his status; Pareja was later freed and became a painter.
- Velázquez's portraits contrast with earlier stylized works

and include notable figures like Pope Innocent X.



El Greco vs Velázquez

- El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos), active in Italy, painted a generation later.
- El Greco's style: expressive, spiritual, and stylized.
- Velázquez's style: naturalistic and grounded in realism.
- Their comparison shows a dramatic evolution in portraiture—toward realism and emotional depth.
- El Greco later influenced modern expressionists with his emotive distortions.



Velázquez's Early Work – *Old Woman Cooking Eggs* (housed in Edinburgh Art Gallery)



- Painted at age 18–19 as a showcase of technical skill.
- Not a portrait, but a genre scene demonstrating his mastery of realism and light.
- Realistic skin tones and shadows
- Distant gazes and minimal interaction
- Challenging elements like glassware and floating eggs in oil

“The Water Seller of Seville”

- Highly detailed figures
- Unusual posing and illusionistic effects (e.g., white paint mimicking water droplets)



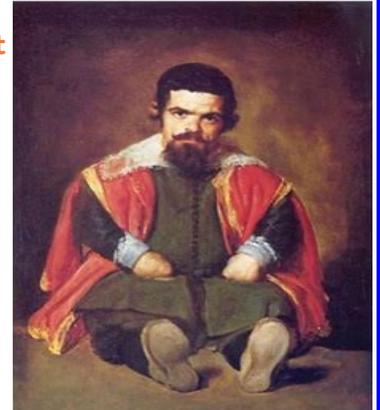
Velázquez and Court Portraiture Portraits of King Philip IV



- Velázquez became a salaried court painter for **King Philip IV**, a member of the Habsburg dynasty.
- The King's mild “Habsburg Lip” (a genetic jaw deformity) posed a challenge.
- Velázquez subtly adjusted proportions and composition to flatter the King while maintaining realism.

Entertainers at Court

- Dwarfs were employed as entertainers in the Spanish court but often treated as low-status figures.
- Velázquez painted them **individually and respectfully**, without their masters, to restore dignity and realism.



Influence on Later Portraiture

John Singer Sargent – *Madame X* (1884)



- Painted a mysterious, high-society woman whose identity was kept secret.
- Sargent's *Madame X* was considered scandalous at the time due to its sensuality and symbolism (e.g. table legs shaped like nude women).
- The sitter posed as a favour and for self-promotion, but the painting was poorly received and never sold.
- Sargent carried it with him for life, modifying it to tone down its risqué elements.
- The painting sparked gossip about the artist's relationship with the sitter and was debated in the press.
- The original life-size portrait was considered too risqué due to exposed skin and a slipping dress strap. The cropped version shows only the top two-thirds.

Tom Roberts - Florence

- Painted around the 1890s, *Florence* depicts Miss Florence Greaves, a family friend.
- Created in a classical style influenced by Velázquez and Sargent.
- Portraits at the time were expensive and often used for self-promotion.
- Roberts used optical techniques: only the face is sharply rendered; other areas are loosely painted, allowing the viewer's brain to fill in the detail.



Portraiture Techniques: Focus and Suggestion

- Effective portraits often keep the **eyes and facial features in sharp focus**, while other areas are simplified.
- This technique is still used in photography and digital editing today.
- The **eyes are key to likeness**, as they remain the same size from childhood to adulthood.

Max Meldrum - Portrait of Edna Mendelssohn (1942)



- Meldrum, a Scottish-Australian artist, painted Edna as part of a commission for her husband, Oscar Mendelssohn.
- Edna appears reluctant or downcast, possibly reflecting her mood.
- Meldrum's technique emphasizes the face, especially the eyes, while the dress is rendered with rough, abstract strokes.
- This selective focus avoids distraction and keeps attention on the subject's expression.

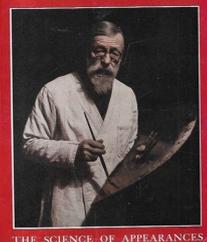
William Dargie - The Wattle Portrait (1954)

- Official Australian portrait of **Queen Elizabeth II**, painted during her post-Coronation visit.
- Became the defining image of the Queen in Australia, displayed in public buildings for decades.
- Dargie used **tonal contrast**: a dark background and minimal detail in the lower half to highlight the Queen's face and jewellery.
- Sparkling effects in the tiara and necklace were achieved with **blobs and speckles of paint**, not detailed rendering.
- The wattle on her shoulder and the gown are suggested with **blocks of colour**, relying on viewer familiarity to interpret the forms.



- The result is a **balanced, iconic portrait** that uses tone and suggestion to powerful effect.

MELDRUM



Meldrum's Legacy

- Meldrum authored *The Science of Appearances* (c. 1950), a foundational text on tonal painting.
- His analytical, left-brain approach influenced artists like Dargie, who adopted tonal strategies to enhance visual impact.

- Dargie also painted a portrait of Alber Namatjira, in 1956.
- **Eyes and hands** are highlighted as particularly difficult to render in portraiture, with **minimal strokes** suggesting form, especially in older or stylised works.
- **Desert lighting** is a factor in obscuring facial detail, especially the eyes, due to strong shadows and brightness.

Comparison of Portrait Styles

- Ric talked about the contrast between **classical portraiture** and **hyper-realism**:

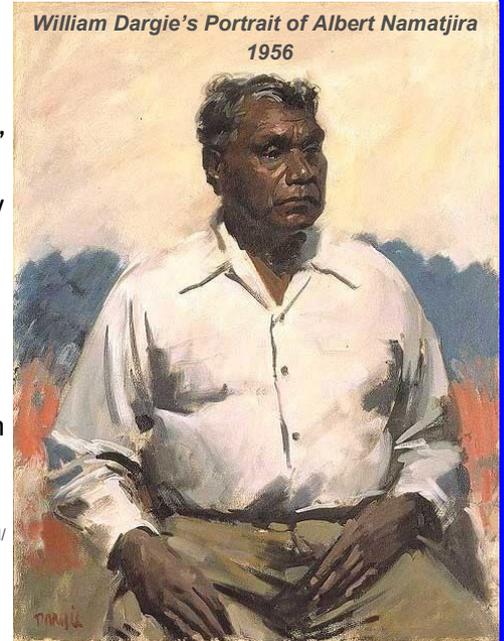


- Classical styles focus on impression and technique.

<https://portrait.gov.au/files/4/e/8/c/i14129-wd.jpg>

Tim Flannery, 2006 Robert Hannaford AM. © Robert Hannaford/ Copyright Agency, 2024.

- **Robert Hannaford**: Known for classical style; painted Tim Flannery's portrait for the 2006 Archibald Prize.



William Dargie's Portrait of Albert Namatjira
1956

- Hyper-realism captures **extreme detail**, down to individual hairs and skin imperfections, but **too much detail** can sometimes overwhelm the viewer and limit personal interpretation.
- **Vincent Fantauzzo**: Known for hyper-realistic portraits of public figures like Julia Gillard and Paul Keating; overcame dyslexia and a disadvantaged background to become a successful artist.
- Fantauzzo's method involves **months of meticulous work** with fine brushes on large canvases.



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Portraiture Techniques: From Velázquez to Meldrum

- Artists like **Velázquez, Sargent, Meldrum, and Roberts** shared a commitment to **observational painting**, often using the **sight-size method**—placing the canvas next to the subject to maintain accurate proportions.
- This technique was widely adopted by the **Australian School of Painting**, including artists with physical limitations who adapted tools to maintain this method, (a disabled artist innovated a pulley system to paint from a wheelchair).
- In contrast, **photographic reference** is seen as less authentic, potentially detracting from the vitality of true portraiture.

Velázquez's *Las Meninas* – A Revolutionary Portrait

- Painted in **Velázquez's studio**, part of the Spanish royal court, *Las Meninas* is one of the most analysed paintings in art history.
- The composition is unconventional:
- We see the **back of a canvas** and **Velázquez himself**, making it also a self-portrait.
- The **main subject** is La Infanta (the young princess), surrounded by attendants, entertainers, and courtiers.
- A **mirror on the back wall** reflects King Philip IV & his wife, suggesting they're standing where the viewer is.



Museo del Prado in Madrid.

- Notable figures include:
- **Maria Barbola**, a well-known dwarf in the court.
- A **mysterious man** exiting through a rear door.
- A **chaperone** in nun-like attire.
- A **court jester**, visible in another version of the painting.
- The painting's layered symbolism, technical mastery, and ambiguous perspective continue to intrigue scholars and viewers alike
- This painting is 3.18mt high and 2.76mts wide, and is housed in

- A **dog in the foreground**, often interpreted as symbolically important—possibly subversive.
- Velázquez painted himself into the scene, subtly asserting his status without directly placing himself alongside the King and Queen, whose reflection appears in a mirror, (*he'd been with them for 30 yrs!*)
- The red cross on Velázquez's chest was added posthumously to signify his acceptance into the **Order of Santiago**, a recognition he sought despite his humble origins.

Reflections on Classical Painting Practice

Ric concluded his excellent lecture by telling us about a workshop he attended, led by **Marjan Bakhtiarikish**, a Persian-born classical art teacher, based in Albany. This workshop involved painting a life model over 10 hours, starting with **monochrome underpainting** before layering colour, which then focused first on **tonal accuracy**. He used **four main tones** (white, grey, dark grey, black) to build a likeness, which then allowed him to observe **skin tone variation**, especially in male faces—redness around the nose, cooler and warmer patches. Removing colour from a painting (photographing it in grayscale) helps identify compositional strengths and distractions.

He also showed us a half-finished painting where the face stood out, saying he was planning to deepen the tones later—drawing inspiration from **Dargie's diamond technique**, where sparkle comes from strategic darkness. He planned to use a mix of **turpentine and leftover paint** for texture, referencing methods from *The Sirens of Appearance*. Much of the painting was done with **fingers**, not brushes—especially the eyes, finished with a **single white dot** to suggest light reflection. That dot is the **brightest point** in the painting, symbolising a window or light source.

He highlighted a piece from **Marjan Bakhtiarikish** — she paints modern subjects in classical styles, such as a man from Albany rendered as if from the 1800s.

Finally, he showed us a stylised portrait of his granddaughter, which apparently drew criticism from his daughter, (her Mum)! Her right eye was larger than the left, which was artistically exaggerated!! In competitions, if no model is available, a **self-portrait** is often a fallback.



Thank you Ric for a most entertaining and inciteful talk about the inner workings of a portrait artist.

U3A TALENT

U3A members continue to show how talented they all are, and again this year we saw concrete proof of this.

In May, one of our stalwart members, Helen Byles-Drage, released her long-anticipated romantic novel, *The Marvellous Miss Markham*, (under the pseudonym of H Be De) and some U3A members were there to listen to her journey.

Helen was an educator and Rural Psychologist (giving us a very enlightening talk back in 2023 about this very subject), but has always loved writing. When she gave us her talk about her time throughout the Great Southern, she had just retired and told us she was pursuing a new pastime in romantic novels. Her first attempt had been received well by her “proof readers”, although some of them mentioned they would like a little more activity on the “romantic front”. So, Helen re-grouped and her finished product was launched on 31st May at Bunbury City Library. Here are some pictures of that event.



Bunbury Library full to overflowing, listening to Helen recount her journey in writing her first “romantic novel” ,

The Marvelous Miss Markham



Helen signing copies of her book.



Now, we fast-forward to July and another book launch by another of our members, Fiona Smith. Fiona was another member who gave us a talk, in 2024, about all the research she was doing on her family. She made us all laugh, when she told us how hard it was to “follow” the family line when many male members of her ancestors used the name Bill in their lives, even although their name WASN'T Bill or William or any other derivate of the name “BILL”!!!



Despite these challenges, Fiona managed to bring it all together and produced a lovely tome celebrating her family on both sides of the ancestral lineage. John and I travelled down to Donnybooks, in Donnybrook, to listen to her journey of the biographies of her family, and enjoyed catching up with her again to congratulate her on her achievement.



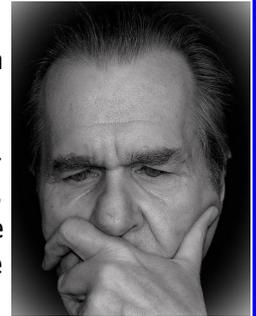
Well done Ladies, and we hope you sell lots of books!

Critical thinking is more important than ever.

Peter Ellerton, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Education; Curriculum Director, UQ Critical Thinking Project, The University of Queensland

There is a Fox News headline: **Transgender female runner who beat 14,000 women at London Marathon offers to give medal back”**

Read about the event elsewhere and it turns out the athlete was also beaten by thousands of people, and it was a participation medal. While the Fox News headline is true, it is framed to potentially elicit a negative reaction. Misinformation is on the rise. We're told we need to think critically when we read things online, but how can we recognise such situations? And what does it mean to think critically anyway?



What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is based on the idea that if all ideas are equal, then all ideas are worthless. Without this assumption, there can be nothing to be critical of. When we think critically, we focus on the quality of our reasoning and the factors that can influence it. In other words, thinking critically primarily means being critical of your own thinking. Importantly, critical thinking is not strongly correlated with intelligence. While some believe intelligence is basically fixed (though there is debate around this), we learn to think critically. Other factors being equal, there's also no evidence thinking critically is an innate ability. In fact, we have evidence critical thinking can be improved as a skill in itself, and it is transferrable to other contexts.

The tools of argumentation

Many factors can affect the quality of your thinking. They include things like cognitive biases (systemic thinking errors), prior beliefs, prejudices and worldviews, framing effects and how much you know about the subject. To understand the quality of our reasoning, we can use the concepts and language of argumentation. People often think “arguments” are about conflicting views. A better way to understand argumentation is to view it as a way of making our thinking visible and accessible to each other. Arguments contain premises, those things we think are true about the world, and conclusions, which is where we end up in our thinking. Moving from premises to conclusions is called inferring, and it is the quality of these inferences that is the concern of critical thinking.

For example, if I offer the premises

P1: All Gronks are green

P2: Fred is a Gronk

Then you have already inferred the conclusion

C: Fred is green - You don't even need to know what a Gronk is to make that inference.

All our rational judgements and decisions are made up of chains of inferences. Constructing, evaluating and identifying types of arguments is the core business of critical thinking.

How can we improve our critical thinking skills?

To help us get better at it, we can understand critical thinking in three main ways. First, we can see critical thinking as a subject we can learn. In this subject, we study how arguments work and how our reasoning can be influenced or improved. We also learn what makes for good thinking by using ideas like accuracy, clarity, relevance, depth and more. These are what we value in good thinking. By learning this, we start to think about how we think, not just what we think about. Second, we improve our critical thinking by using what we've learned in real situations. This helps us build important thinking skills like

analysing, justifying, evaluating and explaining. Third, we can also think of critical thinking as a habit or attitude – something we choose to practice in our everyday lives. This means being curious, open-minded and willing to question things instead of just accepting them. It also means being aware of our own biases and trying to be fair and honest in how we think. When we put all three of these together, we become better thinkers – not just in educational contexts, but in life.

Practical steps to improving critical thinking

Since critical thinking centres on the giving and taking of reasons, practising this is a step towards improvement. There are some useful ways to do this.



1. Make reasoning – rather than conclusions – the basis of your discussions with others. When asking for someone’s opinion, inquire as to why they think that. And offer your thinking to others. Making our thinking visible leads to deep and meaningful conversations in which we can test each other’s thinking and develop the virtues of open-mindedness and curiosity.
2. Always assess the credibility of information based on its source and with a reflection on your own biases. The processes of our thinking can shape information as we receive it, just as much as the source can in providing it. This develops the virtues of carefulness and humility.
3. Keep the fundamental question of critical inquiry in mind. The most important question in critical thinking is: “how do we know?”. Continually testing the quality of your inquiry – and therefore thinking – is key. Focusing on this question gives us practice in applying the values of inquiry and develops virtues such as persistence and resilience.

You are not alone!

Reasoning is best understood as a social competence: we reason with and towards each other. Indeed, to be called reasonable is a social compliment. It’s only when we have to think with others that we really test the quality of our thinking. It’s easy to convince yourself about something, but when you play in the arena of public reasoning, the bar is much higher. So, be the reasonable person in the room. That doesn’t mean everyone has to come around to your way of thinking. But it does mean everyone will get closer to the truth because of you.

Use online resources

There are many accessible tools for developing critical thinking. Kialo (Esperanto for “reason”), brings together people from around the world on a user-friendly (and free) platform to help test our reasoning in a well-moderated and respectful environment. It is an excellent place to practice the giving and taking of reasons and to understand alternative positions. The School of Thought, developed to curate free critical thinking resources, includes many that are often used in educational contexts. There’s also a plethora of online courses that can guide development in critical thinking, from Australian and international universities.

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Of course, if you want to “practise” some Critical Thinking, then the easiest way is to come and join John McKernan, on a Tuesday at the Bunbury City Library, for one of his Topical Talking sessions. We all get to have a say on something we want to discuss, and we then can “test” each others thinking and practise open-mindedness and curiosity. You would be amazed at the different things we get to discuss, all very varied and relevant. John’s last session for this year will be on Tuesday, 25th November, so if you’re free come and join us!

U3A ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

2025 saw us celebrate our 36th Year as a group.

As with most of our recent Anniversary celebrations, we had a short film before heading off to one of our local Restaurants to enjoy a luncheon with all members. This year we chose the Waters Edge Café and were not disappointed with our meals. However, before we traipsed off for our lunch, we had the happy duty of inducting one of our long-term members with a Life Membership.



Carole Connolly has been a member of U3A Bunbury since 2001. In that time she has rarely missed a meeting, unless she has been ill, or visiting family or Penang. She has been on the Committee as the Social Secretary, organising a Christmas in July, a visit to the Bunbury Art Gallery, The Vision Splendid Gardens in Waroona, (now dismantled) and Pemberton Big Brook Dam with U3A Manjimup. She also had some social afternoons at the Leschenault Retirement Village with a variety of subjects. Carole will be celebrating her 91st birthday, very soon, and we wish her a lovely day. If any new member wants to know anything about U3A Bunbury, Carole is the one to ask, and we applaud her becoming our most recent Life Member recipient.

After presenting Carole's certificate, Lyn played a TED talk, recorded in 2007, of Bernie Dunlap. Bernie is a true polymath, whose talents span poetry, opera, ballet, literature and administration. He was the president of South Carolina's Wofford College from July 2000 to 2013, a dancer for four years with the Columbia City Ballet, and a Rhodes Scholar. He did his PhD in English literature at Harvard, and as president of Wofford College, a small liberal arts school, taught classes on a wide variety of subjects, from Asian history to creative writing. He is also a writer-producer for television, and his 19-part series The Renaissance has been adopted for use by more than 100 colleges. He has been a Senior Fulbright Lecturer in Thailand and a moderator at the Aspen Institute. As we are also classed as "Lifelong" learners, I thought the TED talk was very pertinent to us as a group.

Finally, we all made our way down to The Waters Edge Café and caught up with some members who we had not seen for a while, as well as our "usual" band of merry people.



Ann Foley & Gwynne Thomas



Fiona Smith, Denise Lindsay, Lyn Frings, Jo & Peter Williams, John Frings, Elwyn Harries.



John McKernan, Graham & Tyril Houghton, Lynne & John Hamblin

Peter Hicks and Wendy Mortley



Sylvie Richards, Jen Blandford, Carole Connolly and Rolf Stene.



Ann Summers and Helen Byles-Drage



Our 36th Anniversary lunch at Waters Edge Café, Friday 22nd August, 2025

CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS FOR TRAVELLERS

Wayne Custodio 8th August 2025



Should I use local Wi-Fi; Should I buy an eSIM; Should I buy a local phone? These and other questions were answered by Wayne in this pre-recorded Webinar from U3A Canberra.

Wayne has been working in AI strategy and digital transformation for the last 30 years, so had some practical advice for us all. His talk covered a wide range of subjects, all designed to help us when travelling. These included Importance of Cyber Security; Public Wi-Fi Risks; Safe Use of eSIM's; Auto-connect and Bluetooth Risks; Backup Encryption and Remote Wipe; Law and Surveillance Risks and Best Practice

He ran through a selection of key terms used in the technology world. I will post these at a later date so you can familiarise yourself with them before your next holiday.

So, why does the protection of sensitive data matter? Cyber security is critical in protecting sensitive data from unauthorised access and cyber attacks. Because we are relying more and more on digital systems, safeguarding our personal information is essential to prevent data breaches, financial loss and identity theft. Implementing a robust cyber security measure helps ensure the integrity and confidentiality of our personal information. When travelling this is an even stronger reason for good cyber security. Since the higher uptake of AI, there has been an very steep increase in hacking, as they also use the technology for their (dishonest) gains.

Public Wi-Fi Risks: THE RULE OF THUMB IS TO NEVER USE PUBLIC WIFI!



But if you have to.....

These can expose you to hackers, as they use the unsecured networks to intercept your data and access personal information. You may unknowingly connect to other malicious hotspots also designed to steal information. It is essential to use VPN's (Virtual Private Network) when connecting to public Wi-Fi, and most importantly avoid accessing and sending sensitive information (Bank Account details, passwords etc.) "Free" Wi-fi is usually a trap, as hackers can re-direct you to a site that is NOT your bank - even although it looks like it. If you HAVE to use Wi-fi always clear your browsing history, log out of the site you have been on and turn off your roaming or auto-connect tabs.

Safe Use of eSIM and Mobile Data:

Ensure your eSIM profile is securely downloaded and managed to prevent unauthorised access and breaches. Using mobile data is generally safer than public Wi-fi, but still be cautious with your personal information and who you share it with. If you have encryption tools, make sure you use them to protect your data.

More about Auto Connect and Bluetooth Risks

Auto-connect features on your device can connect automatically to all sorts of networks, which in turn can pose all sorts of security risks. Hackers can exploit Bluetooth to also make it a security threat. When you are in a foreign country, you should make sure you disconnect your auto-connect feature to avoid breaches. You can always turn it back on when you are safely home - with all your data intact!! Similarly with your Bluetooth - turn it off when on holiday.

Backup Encryption and Remote Wipe

Encrypting backups keeps sensitive data secure, even if the backup storage is compromised. Remote Wipe allows users to erase data from lost or stolen devices preventing unauthorised access, and implementing encryption and remote wipe features protects sensitive information and enhances data security.

Know the Laws and Surveillance Risk.

Cybersecurity Laws and Regulations - understanding these is essential for ensuring compliance and safeguarding sensitive information. Surveillance risks differ across regions, making it important for users to be aware of local data privacy and monitoring laws (or lack of them!). Staying informed about data privacy laws helps navigate legal implications and reduces the risk of unauthorised surveillance.

Finally, Wayne gave us some Smart Travel Hints with Cyber Security.

- * **ALWAYS use VPN's.** These secure your internet connections by encrypting your data exchanges. This makes it much harder for hackers to access your information.

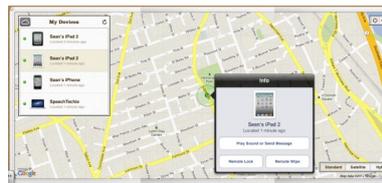


- * **AVOID using PUBLIC CHARGING STATIONS.** These and USB ports can also be compromised.

- * **KEEP YOUR DEVICE/S UPDATED.** By being up-to-date they will have the latest security patches to protect against vulnerabilities and cyber attacks.



- * **UTILISE REMOTE WIPING AND TRACKING.** By enabling these features you will also safeguard any lost devices, and locate them if they are stolen.



HA!
HA!
HA!

Paddy wants a job, but the foreman won't hire him until he passes a little maths test.

"Here is your first question," says the foreman, "Without using numbers, represent the number 9."

"That's easy," says Paddy, and he proceeds to draw three trees.

"What's this?" says the foreman.

"Have you no brain? Tree plus tree plus tree makes nine," says Paddy.

"Fair enough, so here's the second question," says the foreman. "Using the same rules, represent 99."

Paddy stares into space for a while, then picks up his picture and makes a smudge on each tree, then hands it back to the foreman.

Puzzled, the foreman asks, "And how on earth do you get that to represent 99?"

Paddy replies, "Each tree is now dirty, so dirty tree, plus dirty tree, plus dirty tree equals 99!"

"Okay," says the frustrated foreman, "Your last question. Same rules - now represent 100."

Again Paddy stares into space thinking, then grabs his picture again and makes a mark at the base of each tree, before handing the picture back to the foreman.

"You must be mad if you think that equals 100," declares the foreman, so Paddy leans forward and whispers in his ear, while pointing to his picture.

"A little dog came along and pooped by each tree, so now you have three dirty tree's and three turds, so you add them all together to make 100!!!"

HA!
HA!
HA!



MY TWELVE YEARS AT SEA

ALAN WALKER 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2025

Alan, who is also a member of U3A Donnybrook, gave us a fascinating insight into his life, with 12 years travelling around the world on a yacht.

He had been living in Dunsborough but became inspired by Alby Mangles' travel films, so he sold up and purchased a new yacht in Brisbane. He met Phillipa, an engineer, and her daughter Heidi, in Port Douglas. From here they embarked on a test voyage to Papua New Guinea trading clothes for food and artifacts. During their travels they were sustained on a modest annual budget of \$4,000, supported by their trading.

Preparation and Early Challenges

The yacht had a second-hand motor and hydraulic steering, which failed on return from PNG. This made them upgraded the vessel for global travel, reinforcing it for harsh conditions. They also studied for their Coastal Waters ticket and Captains Tickets to travel around the world. Their initial navigation relied on satellite fixes every 12 hours so a GPS unit was later purchased in Malaysia. Their first voyage was in 1989, followed by their major global journey in 1993–2003, and the total distance sailed was 126,000 nautical miles, including 3,000 night hours.

Encounters and Incidents

In PNG, they were attacked by pirates, tied up, and robbed of everything, including their rifle. Phillipa managed to escape her bindings and once Alan was also free, they alerted authorities. A police shootout followed, with a policeman getting killed with Alan's rifle. This led to them staying for 3 months to settle a court case, and clear Alan's name. He never got his rifle back, though!! In Saudi Arabia, pirates boarded again, but they had bought a black dog (with white paws) in Malaysia, calling her Sox and she deterred them. Apparently black dogs are looked on by many Muslim people as evil. In Somalia, they disguised their yacht as a local vessel to avoid pirate detection.

Life Aboard and Income

To maintain their income, they operated a small market stall in many of the ports they berthed at, selling artifacts and trinkets they had picked up along the way. In Israel they earned \$800. They also took backpackers out on fishing trips charging them \$50/day, which included their food. Another income earner was their homemade alcohol!! Heidi completed distance education via correspondence from Brisbane. She would call Brisbane to let them know which country they would be in at Xmas, and all her books for the year would be sent through. Alan's middle son came for a surprise visit, and now he and Heidi are married and have 4 sons!!

Community and Crisis Support

In some islands they assisted fellow Yachties in salvaging and re-concreting a sunken boat. The boat was made of concrete, and when they knew other Yachties were heading down from India, they radioed them to get concrete and other supplies, to mend the boat. The owners of that boat stayed over 18 months repairing the boat.



Notable Locations and Events

- Madagascar: Acquired 100% proof rum from a factory.
- Kenya: Repaired the yacht; faced strong currents and ended up in pirate-prone Somalia.
- Yemen and Eritrea: Brief stays; Eritrean officials welcomed them due to Australian ties, and the reputation of the Fred Hollows Foundation.

- Saudi Arabia: Bought cheap but contaminated fuel; filtered it manually to continue sailing.
- Suez Canal: Engine failure from the contaminated fuel, required towing and repairs.
- Israel: Detained by navy, later allowed to stay and work for three months.
- USA Visa Issue: Denied entry post-9/11 due to a visa technicality; later banned from USA and Canada.
- Italy and Spain: Brief visits; noted economic hardship in southern Italy and wind farms in Cape Verde.
- Madeira: Diverted from travelling to the UK due to ad storms. Headed across to Barbados doing our first full 30 days at sea. Took 4 hr shifts at the wheel, and if anyone needed help we would stamp on the floor, as the bedroom was below the cabin.
- Barbados - St. Martin: Lived and worked for three years; Alan managed a shipyard, Phillipa did engineering. Hurricane Lenny: 150 ml/hr winds sank 1,100 yachts and killed 35 people; Alan assisted with insurance assessments.
- Galapagos: Surprised by long-standing human presence; noted threats to tortoises from feral pets.
- Panama Canal: 30-day crossing.
- Open Ocean: Encountered 10–15 mile-long Russian fishing nets; had to cut through.
- Samoa: Gearbox failure with loss of forward. Alan reversed gears to continue sailing, which returned them to Brisbane, sold the yacht.
- Settled in Tin Can Bay, then built another house, before moving back to Donnybrook, W.A.

Sustenance and Survival

- Prevented scurvy and other diet-related problems, by salting goat and sheep meat sourced from islands and keeping up their supply of fruit and vegetables by trading.
- Baked bread and biscuits onboard.
- Stored 120 litres of water in drums; collected rainwater from sails.
- Had 2 gas bottles, but supply was unreliable; once received compressed air instead of gas in Kenya.
- Refrigerator often failed; declined dubious repair offers in Africa of a hammer & screwdriver “fix”!!

Alan was asked if such a voyage would be possible today, which he suggest it would, but would also require better equipment and security due to increased piracy. However, he remained philosophical about his various scams and setbacks, viewing them as part of the adventure.

Alan also had a display of artifacts that also had some interesting stories, as you can see from the photograph on the right.



All in all a very interesting, and emotional journey around the world!

Here's a few “fun” facts about our age group!

- ⇒ **Adults who learn new skills after 60 improve brain function by 25%.**
- ⇒ **Volunteering once a week lowers stress levels by 20%.**
- ⇒ **Older adults who laugh daily are 40% less likely to develop heart issues.**
- ⇒ **Walking for 30 mins a day adds an average of 3 healthy years to life.**
- ⇒ **83% of retirees say they're happier now than when they were working.**
- ⇒ **People over 55 report feeling more grateful than any other age group.**

How do those statements stack up against your lifestyle?

We celebrate a few birthdays in the month of November:

6th Tyril; 17th Carole; 18th Peter B; 23rd Ann S and 26th Pat.

It is also fitting that we recognise our December birthdays, as we won't have another newsletter until next year: Happy Birthday to:

Jo on the 9th; and Joan and John McK on the 29th.

We wish you all health and happiness on your special day.



Your 2025 Committee are listed below:

President: **Tyril Houghton**

Vice President: **Jo Williams**

Secretary: **Lyn Frings**

Treasurer: **Elwyn Harries**

Speaker Co-Ord: **Ric Stacey**

Newsletter Editor: **Lyn Frings**

Website organiser: **Ric Stacey**

M/Tea Organisers: **Jennie & Allan Staines**

Committee member: **Jen Blandford**

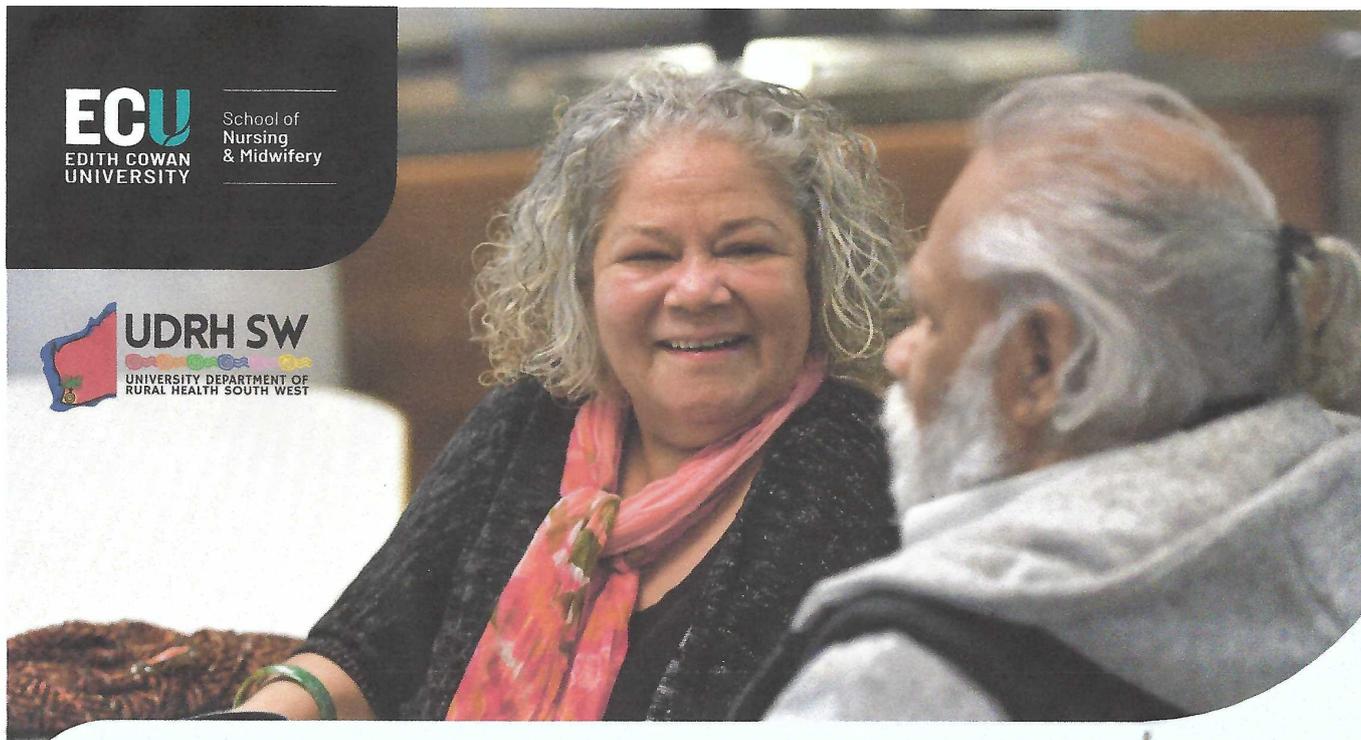
Course Co-ord: *Unfilled*

Publicity Officer: *Unfilled*



Also not forgetting our wonderful Parking pass Officers: **Lynne & John Hamblin**

Of course all these positions will be declared vacant at our next AGM, which will be held on our first meeting in March (13th). All positions on the committee are vacant, with some members standing down. Please give some thought to spending some time on the committee to keep our group fresh and lively with some new ideas. Even if you only serve a term at the position, it gives you an insight into the workings of the group, and also gives some long-standing members a break from their usual duties. The positions are not arduous, as we are a very affable group, with very little discontentment. The nomination forms will come out with the January newsletter, so keep an eye out for that.



Have you or a loved one experienced a stroke?

Two ECU South West researchers, Prof Beth Armstrong and Prof Martin Jones, will be hosting community conversations about life after Stroke, and future research opportunities.

These sessions are free and open to stroke survivors, and families in a caring role, to share their experiences.



BUNBURY

When

Thursday 20 November, 10am to 2pm (light lunch included)

Where

ECU South West Campus (Building 6), 585 Robertson Drive, Bunbury WA 6230

Register

Register online at <https://www.trybooking.com/DGVHV> or scan the QR code.



BUSSELTON

When

Friday 21 November, 10am to 2pm (light lunch included)

Where

Abbey Beach Resort, 595 Bussell Hwy, Broadwater WA 6280

Register

Register online at <https://www.trybooking.com/DGVGZ> or scan the QR code.



**Creative thinkers
made here.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Dr Adam Johnson 08 6304 3291
adam.johnson@ecu.edu.au



We are right in the middle of this years' Seniors Week Activities, (Nov 6-16) and although U3A Bunbury does not have a "specific event", there is plenty of activities around to enjoy.

Did you know Act Belong Commit has an Activity Finder? Firstly log onto their website:

www.actbelongcommit.org.au

and then search for the area you wish to find an activity in and see what is on offer. U3A Bunbury does also post any activities and events they may be involved with, so go and have a look and see what you can find.

Those of you that attended out 2024 Conference would remember Rodney, their Partnerships Co-ord, and his enthusiasm and dedication to the organisation. He has a wealth of experience working in Sport, Recreation and Events, and is passionate about providing the community with plenty of opportunities to enjoy the Act Belong Commit message. He also is the proud Dad of five children!! (Where did he get the time, you ask!! LOL!!)

So with the Seniors Week going full on, and with the festive season fast approaching, it is a timely thing to remember the three basic things to do in our senior years:

1. Keep our brains healthy - Very easy when you belong to U3A.
2. Socialise - we are not meant to be isolated islands! - Also easy with our U3A friends.
3. Get Physical with a bit of physical activity - "Not that walk up the hill again?"

With the coming of warmer weather, please make sure you also look after yourselves with plenty of fluids, and keep yourselves cool on those really hot days. Too much heat has been shown to be dangerous for our health.



On behalf of your committee, please let me wish you all a safe, and happy festive season and we all look forward to your smiling faces at our Welcome Back luncheon in February.

