

# TRIVIUM BULLETIN NO. 6

Grammar | Dialectic | Rhetoric

## Trivium Schools Conference:

There seems to be a growing number of Trivium Schools who are calling for a 'conference' day where we can share experiences, network and work on joint projects.

Three schools have expressed an interest in hosting the event with the Summer Term 2015 being mooted as a good time to hold it. Would you be interested in attending and how many members of staff would you envisage bringing along? What day of the week would be best? Please get in touch with me at:  
martinroborobinson@gmail.com

## New Schools:

Since the last edition of this bulletin I have had the honour of being asked to talk about the Trivium at Wellington College, Bay House School, Turton School and Eton College and I hope to be able to share stories from these school's in future editions as they work on embedding the trivium.



## Haileybury Trivium

This month Simon Smith Deputy Head (Academic) at Haileybury writes about his school's experience of beginning to embed the trivium in their curriculum and pedagogy:

"What is the purpose of education?" Martin asked us, the Haileybury teaching staff, back in September. I don't mind admitting there were a few blank looks and nervous glances around the room. Fortunately Martin reminds us, on the final page of his book, that Bertrand Russell 's number one commandment for teachers to promulgate was "Do not feel absolutely certain of anything". I was certainly leading by example in this regard. Was education to inspire? prepare? impart values? and yes of course exams, grades and university entrance briefly entered my consciousness too. The initial shock and embarrassment subsided as Martin set about explaining the Trivium, and entertaining us in equal measure, for the next two hours. It took a few days for his core message to sink in; now 6 months later I think we have a much clearer sense of where and how the Trivium of Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric fit in to the curriculum and culture of Haileybury. This was liberating. In many ways they were already there. This would be my key message to those interested in how the Trivium works – it gives a clear framework and understanding to everything that you are already doing and therefore how you and your pupils can do even better. We broke Martin's message into 3 slightly different elements: knowledge, thinking and expression.

## Improving Pupil Talk:



Do you want to get your pupils to be able to:

- Speak eloquently?
- Debate thoughtfully?
- Learn about dialectic and rhetoric?

Then come along to this course I am running:

<http://www.teachology-education.co.uk/pupiltalk/>

The dates and venues are:

8TH MAY 2015: Manchester

11TH JUNE 2015: Birmingham

16TH JUNE 2015: London

**Discover how to integrate opportunities for pupil talk into all lessons and how to increase pupils' confidence and skills to develop into gifted communicators and high attainers.**

Firstly, we considered it an excellent basis for our own professional development; we were to role model the Trivium. In CPD sessions we spoke of our subject knowledge, knowing the material and our professional knowledge, knowing what makes a good lesson, what facilitates pupil progress and so on. We analyse, discuss, debate different approaches to learning and of course rhetoric is at the heart of how we communicate our ideas in lessons and how we communicate feedback (John Hattie's name came up more than once) in our marking and reporting.

*Which area of the Trivium were our pupils better or worse at?:*

With the pupils it was about making the implicit explicit. If our Haileybury Habits (Resourceful, Reflective, Resilient, Courageous, Organised, Inquisitive) were how they learn then the Trivium would be what they learn. Learning objectives referred explicitly to one or more elements, cross-curricular teaching has become easier as the pupils now understand that we are, essentially, all working towards the same purpose and the 3 elements provide the framework for pupils' strengths or weakness. Instead of just being "better" at History, do they need to provide more supporting knowledge to an argument, does their argument need to be more balanced or developed or do they just need to write with greater clarity or precision? It helped that I knew their RS, Geography and English teachers were all now focussing on the same issues too. It has lent additional support to our Theory of Knowledge teaching – we are an IB school – an area which pupils, particularly in their first year find difficult to understand. We were able to look at this from a whole school perspective; which area of the Trivium were our pupils better or worse at? Why and what could we do about it? Martin refers too in his book about the "authentic curriculum" we call that the co-curriculum, as do many schools, and again it was reassuring to see that here too there was a good fit. A healthy and vibrant service programme, a wide range of sports and performing arts activities all contribute to our ethos and we can, now, more clearly explain to our pupils the benefits of such a programme.

*Initiatives:*

However, it hasn't all been a quiet satisfaction that we are "doing okay". The Trivium has prompted a number of new initiatives. "Rhetoric" has become a compulsory half-term activity for all our Sixth Formers. In June we are hosting our first TEDxHaileybury event. Our Year 9 pupils experience a

Haileybury Horizons programme. Once a week they have a lesson as part of a 5 week carousel consisting of Current Affairs, Cultural Awareness, Debating Ethics and Leadership. All designed to make them know, think and act in a different way; we are seeking to broaden their horizons beyond the confines of our leafy campus school. Outside of the campus it has invigorated our idea of trips and educational visits just being for their own sake, rather than having to have some link to an exam syllabus; though I must confess to being a little jealous of Oundle School's "Trippium" concept.

*Incredibly simple and powerful tool:*

As with any SLT "initiative" there was a certain amount of resistance and circumspection but now its seen as an incredibly simple and powerful tool to find solutions or a way into a problem. Following our recent ISI inspection we considered how we to make our lessons even more challenging , more regularly. It was suggested that here too the Trivium offered an answer: more challenging subject matter, more challenging questions asked, demanding even more articulate responses. We still have a long way to go. I probably need to read the book, at least once more, but I am reassured and excited to see that other schools Oundle, Highbury Grove etc. are all seeing the benefits of Martin's ideas. Trivium has thus inspired developments in my school but also, I hope, closer collaboration between our likeminded schools too.

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### An invitation to share your experiences:

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It is really helpful for schools to share their work in this bulletin. The more 'trivial' the better! Please get in touch if you have anything you would like to share.

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### Network:

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As well as the opportunity to share some of your work through this bulletin it would be wonderful if we could encourage schools to use this as their first stop for networking opportunities. If you have a project you would like to work on with other schools then please use this bulletin in order to communicate with other institutions and let's see if we can build a networking part of the network!

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## Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered: Betwixt and Between:

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“I’m wild again, beguiled again

A simpering, whimpering child again

Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered am I...”

Oh to be wild again, beguiled again, a child again... bothered, bewildered – the state when ambiguity, uncertainty takes over... Drinking brandy, falling in and out of love, full of foolish charms, not quite asleep... Schroedinger’s catnap... a place where you might be “burned a lot” might be where you “learned a lot... So hard to bear...”

True difficulty, the desirable sublime moment in teaching and learning when the full horror of not knowing what is happening to one has taken over... The student is but betwixt. The teacher has bewitched them. The student, the outsider thrown from the world they knew towards a world they don’t; in slow motion falling with full gothic horror into the dark abyss. And teacher, you threw them, pushed them, deliberately, delicately and sometimes violently... And you enjoy it. They hate you for it... for now...

This liminal state is essential for learning.

Liminality, drawn from the Latin: ‘limen’ – ‘threshold’ a place between two states – this place of purgatory. In trivial terms the space between grammar and rhetoric... and the state of being betwixt – this dialectical state where voices confuse and confound. Here the structure of grammar is either unmade or is not yet understood and the child is taken from certainty into disorder in order to ensure assimilation into a world of informed free thought where they will send out probes into the global village. How to be initiated into the conversation of mankind? We need our teacher. The teacher as kindly benefactor, as well as an odious Shaman taking the class out into the night where the students dance in the dark... but not with Springsteen...

The process of education as coming of age – from putting away childish things to the donning of the robes of adulthood is also cut from this cloth: The grammar of the child’s own life is slowly, deliberately, upset (whether in a child or teacher centred way it is still upset...) ch-ch-ch changed and through that process we are lads insane, falling many times to the floor...

Dazed and confused...

So don’t talk of grit or resilience... teacher... you upset the applecart, don’t blame the child. You took them there, you ensured they stared into the abyss... you have to deal with it; it is part of the ritual.

This piece first appeared on my blog:

<https://martinrobborobinson.wordpress.com/2015/02/14/bewitched-bothered-and-bewildered-betwixt-and-between/>