

MAKING SENSE OF MASS EDUCATION

Third edition

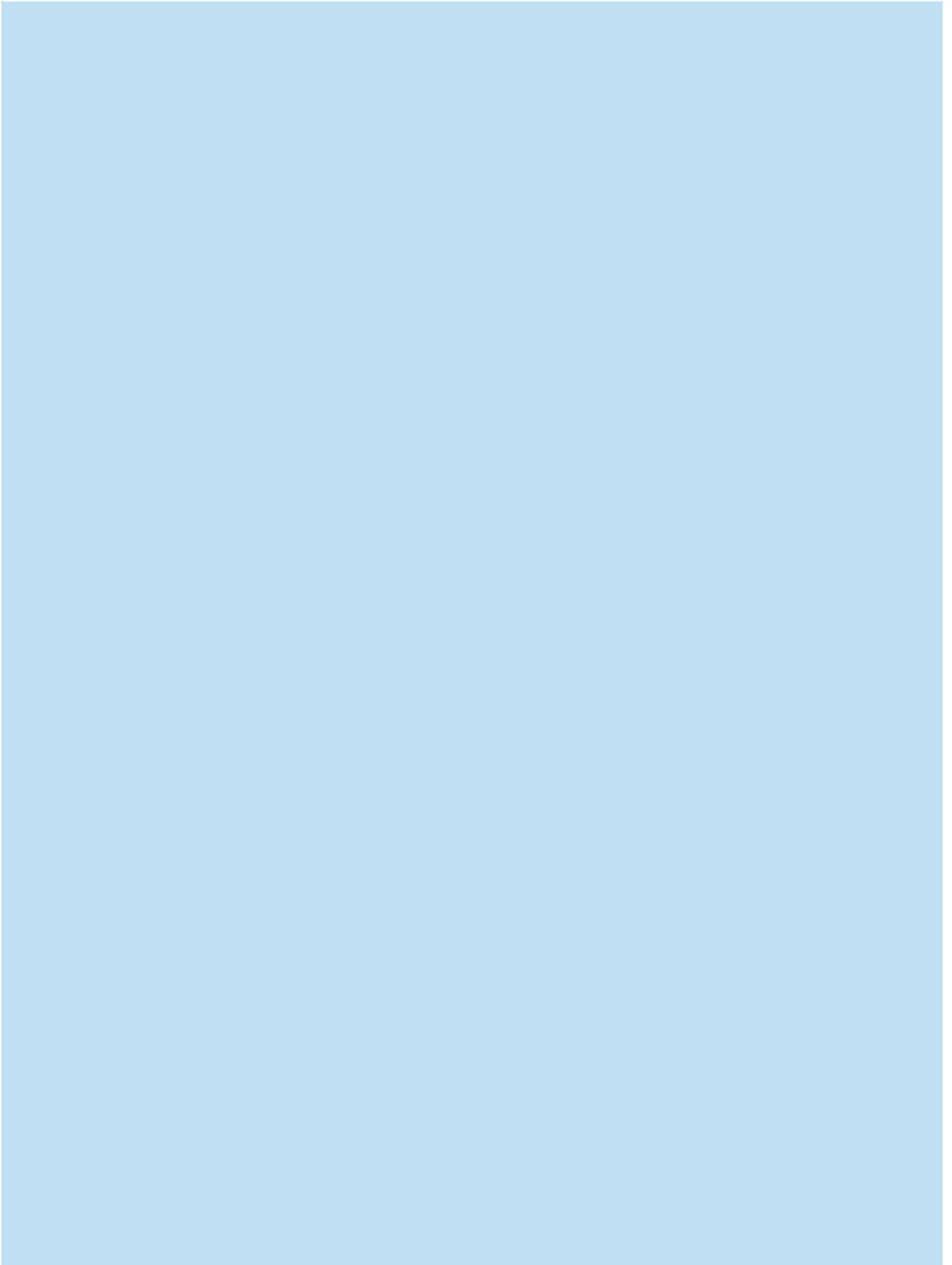
Making Sense of Mass Education provides an engaging and accessible analysis of traditional issues associated with mass education. The book challenges preconceptions about social class, gender and ethnicity discrimination; highlights the interplay between technology, media, popular culture and schooling; and inspects the relevance of ethics and philosophy in the modern classroom.

The third edition has been comprehensively updated to include the latest research, statistics and legal policies. Each chapter challenges and breaks down common myths surrounding each topic, encouraging pre-service teachers to think critically and reflect on their own beliefs. The inclusion of a new chapter on alternative education reflects the ever-changing Australian educational landscape. The companion website provides students with self-assessment tools and resources that foster independent learning and comprehension.

In *Making Sense of Mass Education*, Gordon Tait expertly blurs disciplinary boundaries, drawing on sociology, cultural studies, history, philosophy, ethics and jurisprudence to provide a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental concepts of mass education.

Gordon Tait is Professor in the Faculty of Education, Early Childhood and Inclusive Education at the Queensland University of Technology.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-44579-5 – Making Sense of Mass Education
Gordon Tait
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



Third edition

MAKING SENSE OF MASS EDUCATION

Gordon Tait



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108445795

© Cambridge University Press 2013, 2016, 2019

This publication is copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

Second edition 2016

Third edition 2019

Cover designed by Fiona Lee, Pounce Creative
Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd
Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd, October 2018

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

ISBN 978-1-108-44579-5 Paperback

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.edu.au/academic/masseducation

Reproduction and communication for educational purposes

The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* (the Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of the pages of this work, whichever is the greater, to be reproduced and/or communicated by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that the educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) under the Act.

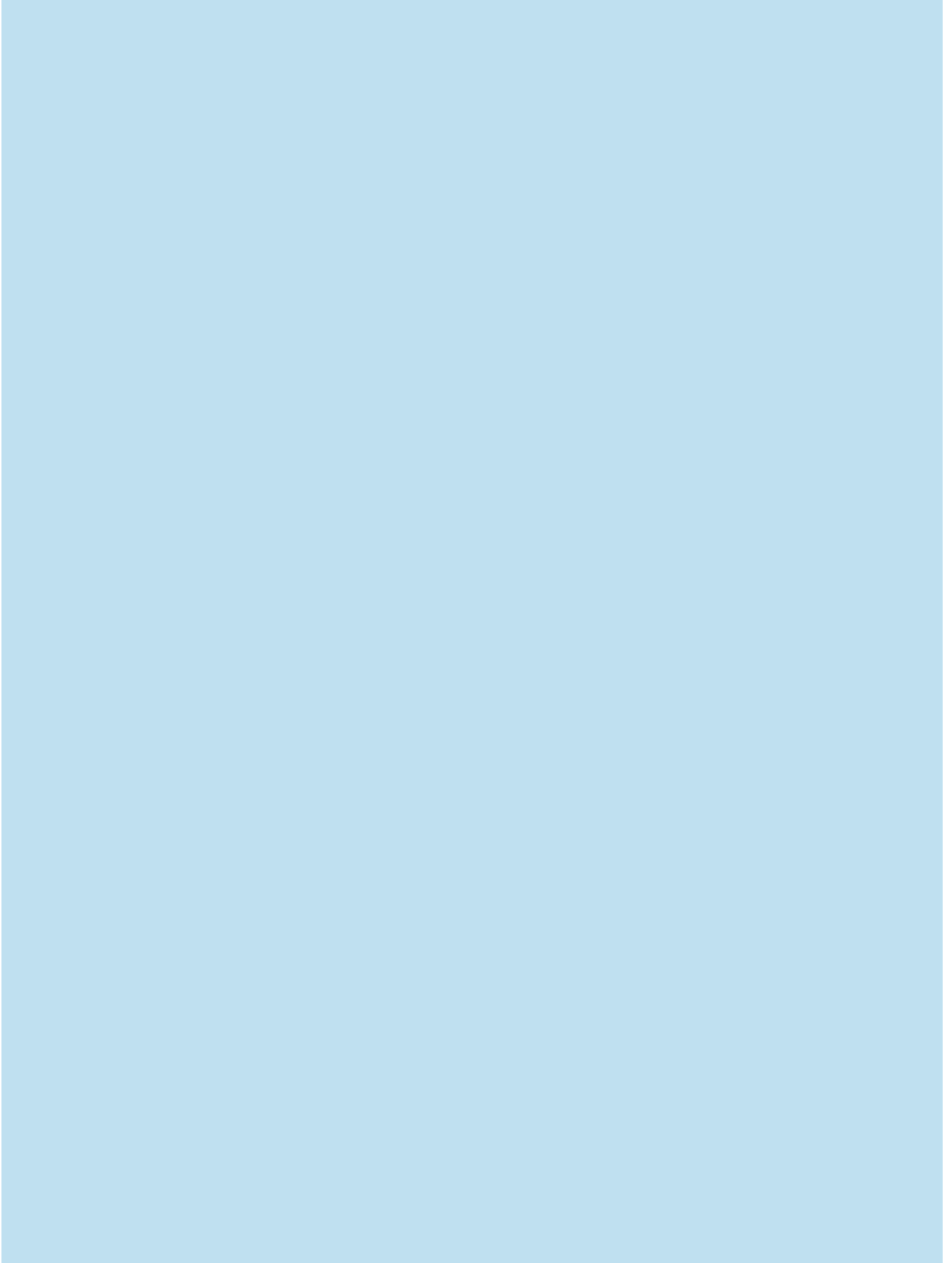
For details of the CAL licence for educational institutions contact:

Copyright Agency Limited
Level 11, 66 Goulburn Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 9394 7600
Facsimile: (02) 9394 7601
E-mail: memberservices@copyright.com.au

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

FOR ALL THE STUDENTS I'VE EVER LAUGHED WITH.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-44579-5 – Making Sense of Mass Education
Gordon Tait
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	xi
Guide to online resources	xii

INTRODUCTION	1
Making sense of mass education	2
Changing contexts of education	3
Some problems with modernist sociologies	4
Beyond modernist sociologies of education	4
The structure of the book	5

PART 1 RE-ASSESSING THE THREE PILLARS: MODERN AND POSTMODERN SOCIOLOGIES OF EDUCATION **7**

[CHAPTER 1] SOCIAL CLASS	9
Introduction	10
Myth #1 Australia is a society characterised by equality	14
Myth #2 Schooling success is only about individual ability	17
Myth #3 Social class is all about money	22
Conclusion	26

[CHAPTER 2] GENDER	27
Introduction	28
Myth #1 Sex and gender are really the same thing	32
Myth #2 Schools are passive spectators to existing gender differences and inequalities	34
Myth #3 Boys are the latest victims of the schooling system	41
Myth #4 Sexuality is simply best ignored at school	44
Conclusion	49

[CHAPTER 3] RACE/ETHNICITY	51
Introduction	52
Myth #1 Humanity is naturally divided into races	57
Myth #2 We no longer discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity	60
Myth #3 Educational outcomes are unaffected by race or ethnicity	64
Myth #4 There is an 'Indigenous problem' in education	66
Conclusion	71

PART 2 THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH: EDUCATION AND GOVERNANCE **73**

[CHAPTER 4] GOVERNANCE **77**

Introduction	78
Myth #1 Society has always been simply a collection of individuals	81
Myth #2 Schools are primarily about education, not regulation	84
Myth #3 The structure of the school isn't really that important to the education process	87
Conclusion	91

[CHAPTER 5] SUBJECTIVITY **94**

Introduction	95
Myth #1 The sole purpose of psychology is to understand the nature of the human mind	97
Myth #2 My conduct may be governed, but my mind remains free	101
Myth #3 Psychology simply discovers new behaviour disorders; it plays no role in creating them	105
Conclusion	109

[CHAPTER 6] PRE-ADULTHOOD **111**

Introduction	112
Myth #1 'Childhood' and 'youth' are facts of nature	114
Myth #2 The categories of 'childhood' and 'youth' have nothing to do with governance	118
Myth #3 'Childhood' is characterised by its innocence, 'youth' by its natural resistance to authority	123
Conclusion	127

[CHAPTER 7] BIG DATA **129**

Introduction	130
Myth #1 Big data isn't that big, or that important	133
Myth #2 The rise of big data has no implications for the field of education	137
Myth #3 NAPLAN is the best thing to happen to education since the invention of chalk	142
Conclusion	148

PART 3 CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION **151**

[CHAPTER 8] THE MEDIA **155**

Introduction	156
Myth #1 We do not need pointless subjects like 'media studies' in our already crowded curriculum	158
Myth #2 With the news media, you don't need to think, you just need to read and listen	162
Myth #3 The media doesn't create moral panics, but even if it does, this doesn't affect education	167
Conclusion	175

[CHAPTER 9] POPULAR CULTURE 176

Introduction	177
Myth #1 Popular culture is rubbish – in terms of taste, it's awful; as an object of study, it's irrelevant	180
Myth #2 Teachers need to be up to date with student cultures	185
Myth #3 Popular culture has no place in the classroom	189
Conclusion	193

[CHAPTER 10] TECHNOLOGY 194

Introduction	195
Myth #1 'Technologies' aren't that important; they don't affect the fundamentals of what it is to be human	200
Myth #2 Digital technology is the answer to all our education problems	205
Myth #3 Technology signals the end of teaching	209
Conclusion	213

[CHAPTER 11] GLOBALISATION 214

Introduction	215
Myth #1 Understanding globalisation is easy; it's simply another word for Americanisation	218
Myth #2 We have an Australian education system here, not any kind of 'globalised' one	223
Myth #3 'Education for Sustainability' has nothing to do with globalisation; it's a politically inspired waste of time	228
Conclusion	232

PART 4 PHILOSOPHY AND MASS EDUCATION 235**[CHAPTER 12] PHILOSOPHY 239**

Introduction	240
Myth #1 Philosophy has no place in the 21st-century curriculum	243
Myth #2 'Education' is self-evident; we don't need philosophy to explain it	248
Myth #3 Teachers don't need a 'personal philosophy of education'	255
Conclusion	259

[CHAPTER 13] ETHICS AND THE LAW 260

Introduction	261
Myth #1 Understanding ethics doesn't help you be a good teacher	263
Myth #2 Unlike ethics, the law is straightforward; everyone agrees what it is, and what it does	268
Myth #3 We have an ethical education system; it does not discriminate	272
Myth #4 There are no real ethical dilemmas left for education law to deal with	276
Conclusion	280

x CONTENTS

[CHAPTER 14] TRUTH AND POSTCOLONIALISM 281

Introduction	282
Myth #1 'Truth' is the most straightforward thing there is	284
Myth #2 Given we haven't been a colony for 100 years, postcolonial theory has nothing to tell us about ourselves	289
Myth #3 The knowledge in our school curriculum is both true, and culturally neutral	294
Conclusion	297

[CHAPTER 15] ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION 298

Introduction	299
Myth #1 There are no serious alternatives to traditional mass education	302
Myth #2 If you do choose to stay within the current schooling system, there are no realistic ways to change it significantly for the better	309
Conclusion	317

CONCLUSION: THE CENTRAL AIMS OF THIS BOOK 319

The intended approach of this book	320
Finally	321

References	322
Index	349

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Olivia Tolich, and everyone at Cambridge University Press, for giving me the opportunity to write the third edition of this book. I'd also like to thank Dr. Briony Wainman for all her work on the digital components of this edition. My thanks also go to The Faculty of Education at QUT for allowing me the space to get it finished, and my wonderful academic colleagues for continuing to provide a stimulating and supportive intellectual environment. And as usual, I would like to thank my partner Belinda – and for the first time, my daughter Ella – for their excellent editorial skills.

Cambridge University Press would also like to thank Briony Wainman for her contribution to the website material for this edition.

GUIDE TO ONLINE RESOURCES

This edition of *Making Sense of Mass Education* is integrated with an extensive companion website: www.cambridge.edu.au/academic/masseducation



This icon appears throughout the textbook to indicate that a resource relating to the concept under discussion is available on the companion website. The descriptor below indicates the type of content, and the ID number the corresponding question within the online resources.

Resources include multiple-choice questions, discussion questions, essay questions, tutorial materials and links to relevant video content.

MAKING SENSE OF MASS EDUCATION

Chapter 1

Social class

Resources

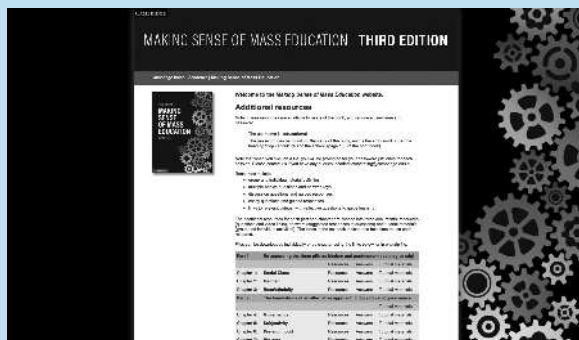
Discussion question 1.1

Why is social class such a prickly topic? Why do we feel awkward talking about it? Does it matter which class we 'belong' to?

Video

'The Class Sketch'

This classic John Cleese sketch about the class system reinforces the point that class and



On the companion website, the online resources for each part and chapter are divided into three documents: resources (questions and video links), answers (suggested responses to questions) and tutorial materials (group and individual activities).