My arguments are set against a backdrop of continued devaluation of arts subjects and widespread dualistic talk that continues to opposes knowledge and skills. One aim of the paper is to dissolve this false opposition; another is to reconsider the meaning of "knowledge" and the role a theory of truth might play in relation to secondary English, rethought as a subject area with creative writing as its principle practice.

I begin with questions concerning truth, and work towards an account that takes its cue from the normative-linguistic theories of the pragmatists (such as Dewey, Davidson, and Putnam). I ask whether such accounts are compossible with aesthetic and aestheticized philosophies of truth (such as Heidegger's, for example), and suggest that linguistic-normative accounts ground, without in any way acting as metaphysical guarantor to, the very possibility of aesthetic accounts (in which art's "nature" is its truth-revealing capacity).

Understanding truth as a linguistic-normative relation (and not a metaphysical constant), has profound implications for secondary English studies and our wider conception of "knowledge": pace Dewey, Davidson, and other pragmatists, if truth consists in a synchronic and affirmative relation between speakers, speech, and contexts of utterance, then knowledge must not be thought in terms of final form, but in dynamic terms: knowledge consists in the realization of truth relations as such; it is not a dormant quality waiting, even "needing," to be "demonstrated." Such a conception dissolves the false diremption of knowledge and skills, and also renders such time-honoured distinctions as knowing-how and knowing-that of little use, as knowledge is now understood as expressed only as practical activity.

Against such an account of truth and knowledge, English emerges as a practice, the principle significance of which lies not in its inculcating learners into literary histories or traditions, but in its opening up of a space in which students' wider learning might be expressed, constituted, realized anew. It is a practice by which thought itself might be thought, by which one comes to the knowing of what and how one knows, as and through a grappling with the very nature of truth relations. In Heideggerian terms, it is the practice of rendering the ready-to-hand present-at-hand, of continually rethinking our relationship to the very language that speaks us as much as we speak it. I conclude by showing that such a conception of English studies is entirely compatible with so-called "core knowledge" and "fact-based" educations.