

Subject on a Page: English



In a nutshell:

English Literature is the study of how writers communicate their messages through language. A Level is different from GCSE because we study a broader range of texts from a range of countries, celebrating a diverse range of authors whilst also examining how they use words in an attempt to challenge or shape the world around them.

In English Literature we:

- Read and discuss a wide range of literary texts, exploring the writers' ideas (AO1).
- Learn how to write informed and well-argued essays in which you can express your personal views on the texts (AO1).
- Analyse ways in which writers use language to communicate their meanings (AO2).
- Explore the historical, generic, geographical, and political contexts in which the texts are written (AO3).
- Explore, debate, and challenge different interpretations of the texts (AO4).

Think like a literary critic:

- Delve into the layers of meaning that writers create in their texts;
- Ask questions and challenge assumptions about texts and the society in which we live;
- Revel in the diversity and richness of literature across time and space;
- Apply literary theories (e.g. feminism, Marxism) to the texts we are reading;
- Engage with a range of viewpoints on the texts (in your class and in your wider reading).

Write and talk like a literary critic:

- All methods learnt at GCSE (e.g. metaphor, simile, adjective etc).
- Words specific to writing about tragedy: hamartia, hubris, tragic hero, downfall, peripeteia, anagnorisis.
- Social hierarchy: class system, tyranny, resistance, rebellion, oppression, Marxism.
- Gender: patriarchal society, domestic sphere, feminism, resistance.
- Colonialism: colonisation, post-colonialism, exploitation, displacement, othering, national identity, essentialism, hybridity, hegemony.

Read like a literary critic:

- Read widely for pleasure: speak to your teacher about specific recommendations. However, it would be useful to read: *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Animal Farm*, *The Colour Purple*, *Beloved*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, *The Handmaid's Tale*.
- Bill Bryson: *Shakespeare*
- Emma Smith: *This is Shakespeare*
- Terry Eagleton: *How to Read Literature*
- Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own*
- Elaine Showalter: *A Literature of Their Own*
- Stephen King: *On Writing*

Revise like a literary critic:

- Use the video tutorials and resources on amysmithliterature.wordpress.com
- The most important thing is to know your texts inside out: read, re-read, and re-read them. Mark important passages with post-it notes.
- Select key quotations and learn them, and then do quotation explosions.
- Think thematically and create mindmaps on each sub-topic.
- Do practice essays: questions are available on Dr Smith's website.

Experience it like a literary critic:

- Read everything you can get your hands on.
- Attend the sixth form book club and talk about books.
- Join in with Dr Smith's reading challenges.
- Join in with reading events in school.
- Go to see live theatre performances.
- Go to events at Collected Books in Durham.
- Read widely online about the authors you are studying.

Progress to a career in English Literature:

- Law
- Teaching
- Journalism
- Advertising and PR
- Communications