



Sixth Form Handbook
English Literature

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About the course

Our A Level English Literature specification engages learners in an extensive range of literature spanning from the established literary canon to esteemed contemporary writings of the 21st century. Components include: Drama, Prose and Poetry with the aim of encouraging students to explore a varied range of both set and self-selected texts.

During the course of their study, students will be expected to:

- engage critically and creatively with a substantial body of texts
- examine different ways of responding to texts including critical readings
- develop and effectively apply their knowledge of literary analysis and evaluation
- explore the significance of a range of contexts
- undertake independent and sustained studies in order to deepen their appreciation and understanding of English Literature, including its changing traditions.

Studying English Literature provides students with the opportunity to develop their exploration of with skill and aptitude. It promotes curiosity; a deepened understanding of the writers' craft and a sharp understanding of how to produce evaluative academic writing. As such, this course is the perfect foundation for any student wishing to progress to undergraduate study at a higher education establishment.

Expectations

The key to success lies in students' ability to organise themselves, their work, and to be able to study independently. All students wishing to take this course are expected to be proficient in the following:

- INDEPENDENT RESEARCH** into the contexts of the texts studied
- WIDER READING** of both literary and non-literary texts
- READING** both literary texts and text books to support theoretical understanding
- NOTE MAKING** in lessons and from extra sources such as books, web pages, periodicals etc.
- REVIEWING** of notes taken in lessons
- REVISING** class notes, class materials, online sources
- WRITING** answers to the set essays

Basic Reminders

1. Arrive on time for every lesson
2. Be prepared with pens, pencils, ruler, rubber, highlighters
3. Make notes in lesson from discussions and the whiteboard
4. Listen carefully and discuss sensibly
5. Have the highest respect for resources and staff
6. Be prepared to use your own time for wider reading/independent research
7. Be willing to read a lot!

Subject content – A Level

Prose: Students will study two prose texts from a chosen theme. At least one of the prose will be pre-1900. Literary study of both texts selected for this component should incorporate the links and connections between them, and the contexts in which they were written and received. This year students will be studying Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Drama: Students will study aspects of the form of drama and how literary and dramatic devices are used to shape meaning. Teaching and wider reading will address the significance and influence of contextual factors. This year students will be studying Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* and William Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Poetry: Students will study a selection of poems from *Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry*, considering the concerns and choices of modern-day poets. They will also be studying a specified collection of pre-1900 poetry. Students will develop depth of knowledge about poetic style, enhanced by study of the contexts in which the poems were written and received. Knowledge of poetic form, content and meaning will be further developed in comparing a named contemporary poem from *Poems of the Decade* with an unseen poem.

Coursework: Students will be assessed via two independently chosen texts. Texts may be drawn from poetry, drama, prose or literary non-fiction, linked by theme, movement, author or period. Students' study will be enhanced by the study of links and connections between the texts, different interpretations and the contexts in which texts were written and received.

How you will be assessed

You will be assessed in three written exams – all open book - and one non-exam assessment.

Paper 1 – Drama (30%) 2 hours and 15 minutes. Section A: Shakespeare: one essay question from a choice of two, incorporating ideas from wider critical reading and Section B – Other Drama - one essay question from a choice of two.

Paper 2 – Prose (20%) 1 hour – One essay question from a choice of two, focusing on the connections between the texts.

Paper 3 – Poetry (30%) 2 hours and 15 minutes. Section A – Post-2000 Specified Poetry: one comparative essay question from a choice of two on an unseen modern poem written post-2000 and one named poem from the studied contemporary text. Section B – Specified Poetry Pre-1900: one essay question from a choice of two.

Non-exam assessment (20%) - one extended comparative essay referring to two texts. The advisory total word count is 2500–3000 words.

Pre-reading List & Materials

Books

Classic texts:

- Far From the Madding Crowd*: Thomas Hardy
- Lady Chatterley's Lover*: D H Lawrence
- Wuthering Heights*: Emily Bronte
- Cold Comfort Farm*: Stella Gibbons
- The Portrait of Dorian Gray*: Oscar Wilde

Contemporary fiction:

- The Shadow of the Wind*: Carlos Zafon Ruiz
- His Bloody Project*: Graeme Macrae Burnet
- The Bell Jar*: Sylvia Plath
- Beloved*: Toni Morrison
- Birdsong*: Sebastian Faulks
- The Buddha of Suburbia*: Hanif Kureishi
- The Color Purple*: Alice Walker
- The Eyre Affair*: Jasper Fforde
- Life After Life*: Kate Atkinson
- The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: Douglas Adams
- Memoirs of a Geisha*: Arthur Golden
- Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*: Jeannette Winterson
- Perfume*: Patrick Suskind:
- Regeneration*: Pat Barker
- Life of Pi*: Yann Martel
- The Wasp Factory*: Iain Banks
- White Teeth*: Zadie Smith

Non-Fiction Reading

- Angela's Ashes*: Frank McCourt
- How to Be a Woman*: Caitlin Moran
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*: Maya Angelou
- Sky Faring*: Mark Vanhoenacker
- Notes from a Small Island*: Bill Bryson
- Touching the Void*: Joe Simpson
- Any broadsheet newspaper: look out for opinion writers especially

Poetry

- Mean Time*: Carol Anne Duffy
- Book of Matches*: Simon Armitage
- The Nation's Favourite Poems*: Griff Rhys Jones

Some writers to follow on Twitter

@chuckpalahniuk @SalmanRushdie @neilhimsel @MargaretAtwood @jk_rowling @BretEastonEllis @Beathhigh @MichaelRosenYes @Joannechocolat @monstroso @malorieblackman @gracedent @Wintersonworld @EricaJong @susanhillwriter @caitlinmoran @DAaronovitch @indiaknight

Tasks before September

Task 1: Linguistic terminology

To do well in your English course it is essential that you are familiar with a wide range of linguistic terms. Start a [glossary](#) for yourself that you can add to during the course of your studies. Be sure to include a definition and an example.

Begin with the following terms:

Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, Determiner, Personal pronoun, Clause, Phrase, Simile, Metaphor, Deixis, Amelioration, Pejoration, Phoneme, Morpheme, Denotative, Connotative.

Task 2: Presentation

Read one of the texts from the pre-reading list then research and prepare a short (3-5 minute) presentation on an aspect of language use within the text.

Research skills

As part of this course, you will need to develop effective research skills. Here are a few tips:

1. Don't just use the internet – remember there are lots of books out there that you can use!
2. Be willing to spend enough time on research – don't expect it to be a quick 5 minute task.
3. Read and make notes in your own words, rewrite information – don't just copy huge chunks.
4. Write down your source (either the URL & date accessed or the title & publisher of the book plus page numbers).
5. Triangulate your sources: check a number of sources – don't just use one.
6. Evaluate the information you have found – what do you think of it?
7. Narrow your research – could you examine one aspect in more depth
8. Organise your information and consider how it is to be presented.
9. Create a padlet or similar to store URLs for regularly used websites – share it with your friends!
10. Don't wait to be told to research something – use your initiative!

Independent Study

Independent Study or Flipped Learning forms an essential part of your course. Often you will be set tasks that need to be completed before your next lesson with a particular teacher. Failure to complete these tasks will mean you will not be able to access certain parts of the course and may mean you are excluded from the lesson until you have caught up. Please take responsibility for your own learning by completing the tasks set.

Who can I contact for help?

If you are unclear on any aspect of this booklet or if you are debating which English course to take, please contact us.

Literature team:

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