

English Literature

A Level

Overview

English Literature develops students' enjoyment and understanding of literary texts and their contexts. It cultivates important skills such as analysing and evaluating, developing and considering arguments and communicating effectively. It is a good base for any university course and is well regarded by employers.

Students have progressed to a wide range of courses and careers with this qualification, including English at Oxford, Cambridge and Russell Group universities. It is a subject particularly well-suited to those who like to explore both big ideas and the smaller details that are so important in literary writing. Above all, it suits students who enjoy reading, both independently and as part of a group.

This course will involve the detailed analysis of a range of prose, poetry and drama texts; students will be studying the texts in more detail than at GCSE and will look specifically at the craft of the writer and the various contexts of the work. Students will be given many opportunities to express their own views, and those of others in both discussion and writing.

What goes well with this course?

English Literature complements a broad range of subjects.

Progression

Many English A Level students choose to continue their studies at university. Those who choose to follow other disciplines, benefit from the essay writing and analytical training, as well as the cultural

insights that come from literary study. They will build strong communication skills as they learn to articulate a clear, well-informed point of view.

Course Content

The course has four components:

- **1. Drama:** Students study a play by Shakespeare in Year One which is re-visited in Year Two, alongside a tragedy or comedy by another playwright. Their studies in Shakespeare will be supported by a "Critical Anthology" that will include some of the best literary criticism about that text
- **2. Prose:** Students will study two prose texts from a chosen theme: one a well-known literary "classic" written before 1900, the other a well-regarded modern novel written closer to their own lifetime. Both will be studied in Year One and re-visited, with a sharper critical eye in Year Two
- **3. Poetry:** In Year One, students will study a range of poetry from an anthology, 'Poems of the Decade' exploring poetic form, meaning, language, style and conventions. This will be revisited in Year Two, when these poems will be compared to an unseen contemporary poem. They will also undertake the detailed study of a range of poetry from a particular poet or period before 1900
- **4. Coursework:** Students will study two texts that will allow them to follow a theme, movement, author or period. The final essay comparing two

texts will be between 2,500 and 3000 words long

Educational Experiences

Course Specific Trips, Visits & Experiences

English Literature students have the opportunity to take part in a variety of course related trips and talks. In recent years, these have included visits to:

- the Richmond Theatre to see *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
- the Vaudeville Theatre to see *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- Reigate Everyman Cinema to see a live broadcast of the RSC's production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and trips to The Globe, National Theatre and Young Vic
- Stratford-Upon-Avon to see the RSC perform Shakespeare's romantic comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*
- The Old Vic to see *King Lear*
- Workshops led by Neil Brown, Artistic Director of the Lost in Space Theatre Company

Assessment

The five assessment objectives for English Literature can be summarised as testing students' ability to:

- AO1: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
- AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
- AO3: Demonstrate understanding of

the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received

- AO4: Explore connections across literary texts
- AO5: Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations

The second year begins with coursework that represents 20% of the final grade. The course will culminate in three final examinations based upon the texts studied and the analytical skills developed during the course. All the examinations are 'open book', allowing students to take a clean copy of the texts into the examination.

The exam board for this A Level is Pearson Edexcel.

Entry Requirements

All students need to have at least five GCSEs at Grade 4 or above (and a satisfactory school reference) in order to be accepted on an A Level/BTEC Level 3 Programme.

In addition, students should meet the following minimum GCSE requirement:

- Grade 5 in English Language **and** English Literature

Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is essential for achieving a good grade at A Level.

Students will enjoy this course if they:

- Like reading, analysing and discussing literature and works of criticism
- Are prepared to express their own views clearly and accurately
- Enjoy writing essays