

Our main aim is to encourage and recognise each individual's ability to delve deeply into novels, plays and poems. A Level English Literature students will engage in active debate about the texts' literary, historical, philosophical or theatrical significance through a consideration of different critical perspectives and possible layers of meaning. Students are encouraged to enact the texts in class and to produce presentations for their peers. We encourage each class member to read widely so that they can express and develop creative and independent opinions about the texts they are studying and the 'unseen' material they encounter. Reading a wide range of imaginative works enables students to gain skills and aptitudes which can be transferred to a vast range of future employment contexts and will help them to reflect on their life experiences.

Course Content

Students will study a range of prose, poetry and drama texts in depth, including at least one of Shakespeare's plays and a post-2000 work. They will also respond to 'unseen' material and will be asked to make connections between texts. Unlike IGCSE, students can bring most of their texts into the examinations.

Students are prepared for the AQA A Specification. This consists of:

Component 1: Love Through the Ages

Three hour exam (closed book for Othello only) 40%

Othello, The Great Gatsby and a poetry anthology are studied. There is also a requirement to compare two 'unseen' love poems.

Discussion will focus on the ways that texts from different times can be connected through the theme of love. Jealousy, betrayal, sexual politics and gender roles are key themes.

Component 2: Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to the present day

Two and a half hour exam (open book) 40%

A modern prose text such as The Handmaid's Tale, Owen Sheers' poetry and A Streetcar Named Desire are studied. The examination will also include an unseen extract. The examination questions will invite candidates to explore the ways in which modern and contemporary literature has engaged with some of the climactic social, cultural, political and personal issues that have shaped our lives.

Issues about race, the impact of the war and post-apocalyptic fears are considered, alongside some explosive, controversial texts.

Component 3: Texts Across Time

Non-exam assessment (coursework) 20%

Two linked texts of candidates' choice are compared. At least one text must be written before 1900 and the texts must be by different writers. Different critical views and opinions are debated (2,500 words). Pupils can write their own essay title. Texts such as A Clockwork Orange, The Bloody Chamber and The Picture of Dorian Gray have been popular choices.

Study Visits

Regular theatre visits make an important contribution to the course. They help students to respond to the plays that we study in school and provide a wider sense of the qualities of drama. In the Sixth Form, the department organises a residential study visit to Stratford-upon-Avon which involves seeing plays by the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Requirements

English Literature A Level demands analytical and essay-writing skills. Students will learn to read with understanding and a feeling for style, tone and purpose. They will also become experienced in arguing a case clearly and concisely.

Our course provides a base from which pupils could take their study of literature further, but the skills and the qualification gained will be of value whatever subsequent course a student follows. Top universities consider English Literature an academically rigorous facilitating subject as it demonstrates excellent communication skills and the development of critical and analytical thought. Essentially, we hope to promote enjoyment of ground-breaking literature.

The study of English Literature in the Fourth and Fifth Years provides a sound basis for A Level. Above all, it is vital that students who wish to take the subject enjoy reading.