

A Level English Language and Literature

The ideal course if you have a love for literature but also a fascination with how language works in everyday contexts.

Why choose this course?

The English Language and Literature A Level allows you to be creative - not only in the fiction and non-fiction writing you will produce for your coursework - but also in the creative approach you can take in your analytical work. How? This multi-disciplinary A Level encourages you to explore the linguistic and literary aspects of every text that we study, whether that's a podcast transcript or literary classic.

What will I learn?

Year 1

Voices in Speech and Writing

This component has an explicit focus on the concept of 'voice'. You will study how spoken and written voices are crafted in literary, non-literary and digital texts, and how texts are formed for specific audiences, purposes and genres. This will allow you to produce your own creative work in response to a stimulus text for the coursework module.

You will develop a deep understanding of how writers and speakers shape language to create a sense of voice in their work, and will look at connections between texts as well as the significance and influence of context.

Varieties in Language and Literature

This component focuses on the ways in which different writers convey their thoughts or ideas towards a theme in literary texts. We will be focusing on the theme of 'Society and the Individual' in the seminal novel 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Lorraine Hansberry's wise and tragic play about race in America, 'A Raisin in the Sun'.

Your understanding of how writers use linguistic and literary techniques to craft their pieces and communicate ideas or issues will be developed in this module, as well as your ability to analyse the significance and influence of contexts. If you have an interest in American culture and politics, this course will present a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the cultural heart of the US and the background to current day political divisions and racial inequalities.

Year 2

Voices in Speech and Writing (exam worth 40% of the A Level grade)

Using the same anthology of texts on 'voice' as in Year 1, you will deepen your understanding of how voices are formed by comparing the texts previously studied to unseen texts.

You will also develop your understanding of literary 'voice' through the study of the explosive twentieth century play and cultural touchstone, 'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams. Studying this play will complement your growing understanding of twentieth century American literature and allow you to examine another dimension of the identity of modern America: the history of the South. Williams' brand of 'plastic theatre' should also provide a memorable contrast to the literary styles of our previous texts.

Varieties in Language and Literature (exam worth 40% of the A Level grade)

As in Year 1, we will be focusing on the theme of 'Society and the Individual' via the novel 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hansberry's play, 'A Raisin in the Sun'. You will deepen your knowledge of the relationship between the texts as we prepare for the comparative essay question on the two texts.

Your analytical skills – now honed by over twelve month's practice – will also be put to use examining extracts of unseen prose, short excerpts of non-fiction from around 1900 to the present day. Your challenge is to use, as

insightfully as possible, the small amount of background you are given to explore the writer's voice and views.

Investigating and Creating Texts (Coursework – worth 20% of A Level grade)

This module allows you to express your creative writing skill through the production of two pieces of writing which have been inspired by your wider reading: one piece of fiction writing and one piece of creative non-fiction writing. You will then write an analytical commentary reflecting on your studied texts and the pieces of writing you have produced.

Assessment Arrangements

You will be assessed regularly on written essay work that is conducted either as homework or under timed conditions in class and given feedback on your progress. You also will be assessed regularly on linguistic and literary terminology.

Discussions and presentations are a vital part of our assessment process and you will be expected to contribute to those and reading exercises.

You will review your own performance in 1:1 sessions with your tutor.

You will undertake mock examinations on each unit in advance of your internal progression exams at the end of Year 1 and the final external examinations at the end of Year 2.

You will be formally examined on each unit that you study. The examinations are traditional and essay-based, and are sat at the end of the second year, although mock exams will be administered at the end of the first year to ensure progress. Coursework in the second year is compulsory.

Information & Support

We encourage all students to read widely and conduct their own research into language and literature, especially those who wish to study English at degree level. Reading some of our core texts in advance of beginning the course would be very beneficial, as would reading around the texts and themes, in fiction and non-fiction, both related to the period (early to mid-twentieth century America) and current day reflections on these issues. We would be happy to guide you towards writers, themes or texts should you require some inspiration.

Where will it take me?

This A Level enables you to develop the vital critical, creative and analytical skills required both for progression to higher education and for enhanced employability across a huge range of subjects and sectors.

Naturally, the course provides an excellent grounding for all English-based degrees, both Language- (or Linguistics-) and Literature-focused. Additionally, as a well-recognised academic A level, the course is also a respected and established pathway into a broad range of degrees such as law, psychology, sociology, media or communication, and education.

What will I need?

Five GCSEs at grade 4 or above including a grade 6 or above in either English Language or Literature, and a grade 5 or above in the other English subject. Successful A Level students would normally have achieved a grade 6 or above in a number of relevant GCSE subjects.

It clearly helps to enjoy reading and learning generally, to have an interest in grammar and a love of the written and spoken word. You also need to be highly motivated and capable of carrying out independent research and wider reading.

Additional Information

Awarding body: Edexcel