



'Bridging the Gap'

A LEVEL & IB ENGLISH LITERATURE



CHALLENGE • NURTURE • INSPIRE





An introduction to studying English Literature in the Sixth Form

Congratulations on choosing to study English Literature.

Whether you have chosen to study English literature at A level or as part of the IB diploma programme, you have chosen to study a course that will not only build on the skills you already possess, but also encourage you to think critically about the writers that have helped shape the world we live in.

This booklet is organised into sections covering the key aspects of A level literature and IB English A literature. The final section contains advice and some activities to help you make a strong start to your studies in September.

The A Level course

The study of English literature consists of the study of literary texts, i.e. poetry, prose and drama. This course will suit you if you love reading and talking about books.

You will sit three exams at the end of the course: a poetry paper (consisting of two questions), a drama paper (you will answer questions on a Shakespeare text and two other plays) and an unseen paper. These three exams will be worth 80% of your final mark. You will also produce a coursework assignment which will consist of a comparative essay discussing a post 20th and pre 20th century text. The assignment will total 3,000-3500 words and will be worth 20% of your final mark.

You will be expected to participate actively in lessons, which will consist largely of discussion and debate inspired by your reading. You will talk a lot about books and the issues that underpin them: for example, a discussion about Jane Eyre might move in and out of talking about the way men treat women, then and now, or a discussion of Hamlet might incorporate an exploration of issues around gender and sexuality. Your own personal experience could be relevant to either of these discussions. As well as teacher-led discussions, students take turns in presenting to the class and leading discussion. Everyone contributes equally.

Prep will vary between the writing of essays about texts, preparation for discussion and wider reading.

Eduqas A level English literature: course code A720

<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/english-literature/as-a-level/>

It is useful to know both the exam board and course that you are going to complete, in order to discover important information such as exam dates or past papers. The hyperlink above will help you find out even more about your A level course.

Recommended Reading:

One of the wonderful things about an English literature course is that it introduces you to a wide array of extraordinary authors and texts. To get you started, please find below a selection of the texts that you will be studying.

A selection of A level set texts:

The Duchess of Malfi, John Webster

A Streetcar Named Desire, Tennessee Williams

Selected Poems, John Keats

Paradise Lost Book IX, John Milton

Selected Poems, Ted Hughes

Selected Poems, Sylvia Plath



The IB course

English A: literature

English within the IB diploma programme consists of the study of literary texts, i.e. poetry, prose, drama and non-fiction.

The syllabus

Higher Level

In the Lower Sixth, you will study a range of texts in different genres. You will prepare for an oral presentation exploring the global connections between two texts. You will then write a coursework essay on one of your studied texts. In the Upper Sixth, you will complete your oral presentation focusing on two texts that you studied in the Lower Sixth. You will then study a number of texts from different genres in preparation for an exam taken at the end of the course in which you will write comparatively about two of these texts. You will also take an Unseen exam at the end of the course where you are required to respond to two unseen passages of prose, poetry, drama and non-fiction; you will practise the skills for this exam throughout the course.

Standard Level

The Standard Level course is similar to the Higher Level course apart from the following key points of difference

1. No coursework essay.
2. SL pupils are required to write on one text only in the Unseen paper.
3. SL students study 9 texts instead of the 13 texts studied by HL students.

In both HL and SL classes you will be expected to participate actively in lessons, which will consist largely of discussion of texts. Prep will vary between the writing of essays about texts, preparation for discussion and oral presentations and wider reading.

More information can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/language-and-literature/language-a-literature-slhl/>

A selection of IB texts

HL

Never Let Me Go

We

Madame Bovary

Pride and Prejudice

The Road to Wigan Pier

Hamlet

The Death of a Salesman

The poetry of Pablo Neruda

The Bloody Chamber

SL

The Reader

Woman at Point Zero



The Kite Runner
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Death of a Salesman
Antony and Cleopatra
The poetry of Carol Ann Duffy

Preparing for September

First steps

If you want to consider why we read and write, this is a quick (quite blistering in fact) synopsis of why we study literature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSYw502dJNY>

You may want to also watch some TED talks on the topic of English Literature found here: https://www.ted.com/playlists/346/the_power_of_fiction_1.

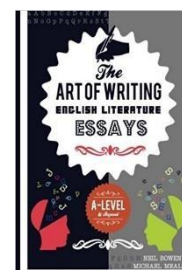
Essay Writing

One of the biggest challenges that some English literature students face when beginning the course in September is essay writing. Here are a few pointers to help ease the nerves.

- Make sure that you have checked exactly what is required of you for the essay itself – details such as if there is a word-count requirement and specifics such as what areas of the text you are focusing on.
- Speak to your teachers – they are there to help and will be able to guide you.
- Plan and prepare – you must give yourself plenty of time to think and to write. Plan out your time and do not leave it until the last minute.
- Review and edit – once you have finished writing you must always give yourself a good amount of time to check through your response for both aspects such as SPAG checking but also checking that you have covered the question properly.

The Art of Writing English Literature Essays

This is an excellent book (which is part of a series of excellent books) for honing your essay writing skills. It has a superb section on the idea of writing coherently and cohesively (a difficult skill to master) and is ultimately an excellent reference guide for each and every essay you will write.



Preparatory Tasks

The best thing that you can do to prepare for English literature is to read a wide range of good quality texts. But beyond reading you can also do these:

Choose a suitably challenging novel, poem (or collection of poetry) or a play (or do all three) to read before your course, and then answer and prepare the following:

1. Take notes of any ideas or techniques that the writer used that interested you.
2. Write a critical review of the text. Here is an example, a review of *The Handmaid's Tale* in *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/sep/26/the-handmaids-tale-margaretatwood>
3. Produce a piece of creative writing inspired by the text – this should in some way mimic the style of writing of the author – and write a commentary on how you have achieved this. .
4. Watch a performance of a play and review it. BBC iplayer is a very useful resource and includes, amongst other things, a number of leading Shakespeare productions.
5. Read a critical view of the text that you have chosen.
6. Create a short presentation (3–5 minutes), that you can deliver to your class and/or teacher, on the text which covers the central ideas of the text in a critical and considered fashion.