



Pearson

# Y12: starting your coursework for A level English Language and Literature

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Clare Haviland, English Subject Advisor

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# A Level English Language and Literature

## Specification

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in English Language and Literature  
(9EL0)

First teaching from September 2015

First certification from 2017

Issue 3

## What we're going to look at

Overview of what you need to do for coursework

1. Choosing a topic/theme and texts
2. What kind of texts can I produce?
3. Guidance on fiction and non-fiction
4. Check an initial outline with your teacher
5. Do the research and think about how to use your stimuli texts/style models



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## What we're going to look at cont'd

- 6. Planning and writing first drafts of your 2 pieces
- 7. First draft of commentary
- 8. Good working habits
- 9. Referencing
- 10. What your teacher can and can't help you with
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# Why am I speaking to you today?

To reinforce the instructions your teacher has given you.

To help you work on your coursework independently.

All the tips given in this presentation are **ways** you 'could' approach your coursework. I am not saying this is '**the way**'.

To get a sense of the whole project, you can look at this [student coursework planner and log](#).

# What do I need to do for the coursework?

1. Choose a topic or theme that you are interested in.
2. Choose & read two texts which relate to the theme, one fiction and one non-fiction.
3. Reflecting on the stylistic and/or thematic influence of the texts you've read, craft two pieces of original writing, one piece of fiction and one piece of creative non-fiction with a total word count of 1500-2000 words (AO5 assessed).
4. Write one separate analytical commentary reflecting on the texts you studied and their stylistic/thematic influence on the pieces of writing you have produced with a total word count of 1000-1250 words (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4 assessed).
5. The total word count for all 3 pieces is 2500-3250 words, not including footnotes (if used) and bibliography. See slide 19 for advice on in-text referencing in your commentary.

Coursework makes up 20% of your A level.

Total of 60 marks available – 36 marks for the original writing and 24 marks for the commentaries.

# 1. Choosing a topic/theme and texts

Once your teacher has explained what you need to do for coursework, you could discuss with other students what topics you're interested in and the sort of texts you could read.

## What kind of texts can I choose?

You must choose **complete texts** that are published with their own ISBN, not an individual newspaper article, or poem for example.

The texts chosen should be rich 'style models'. This means the authors are shaping their ideas in interesting ways, using literary and linguistic techniques that you may be interested in trying out in your own writing.

The texts could also be chosen for their thematic content. You may wish to explore the themes they raise in your own writing.

# 1. Choosing a topic/theme and texts cont'd

You can choose:

- From genres of fiction such as prose fiction, poetry, drama and short stories, and genres of non-fiction such as travel writing, journalism, reportage, diaries, biographies and collections of letters. NB remember the requirement to study 'whole texts'. If you select poetry, you will need to have a published collection of poetry.
- Any text from the specification that has not been studied in components 1 or 2
- Texts of similar 'quality' to the set texts on the specification
- 2 texts by the same writer
- Texts in translation

Have a look at the many examples in the [Getting Started Guide](#).

As well as your two texts, you will read other texts as part of your research into your chosen theme and genre/s of writing.

## 2. What kinds of texts can I produce?

NB Whilst a collection of poetry may be chosen as a stimulus text, we do not recommend writing poetry as your fiction piece.

<b>Fiction</b>	<b>Creative non-fiction</b>
Short story	Journalism
Chapter from a novel	Article
Screenplay extract	Travel writing
Fictionalised diary entry	Memoir
Additional chapters/sciences for stimulus text	Biography extract
Short radio play	Documentary
Monologue	Review
	Blog
	Podcast



## 2. General pointers on deciding which kind of texts you will write

Bear in mind

1. The word count of 1500-2000 words for both of your pieces. Some students use more of the word count on the fiction piece. Can you realistically write the type of text you've chosen with that number of words?
2. Be clear about the genre, audience and purpose of the writing pieces you've chosen as you will need to explain these in your commentary.

# 3. Guidance on fiction and non-fiction

## Fiction

This should deal with events which are imaginary i.e. invented by YOU.

This could also be original creations in non-current timeframes, for example, a newspaper article written in the 1920s is fiction, not non-fiction.

## Non-fiction

This must be created using **information** from the real world rather than invented by you.

The text **MUST** be in a non-fiction genre.

Examples might include, those in the *Voices in Speech and Writing*: anthology: article, reportage, speech, script, diary etc.

# 3. Guidance on fiction and non-fiction cont'd

## Some key tips for Non-Fiction:

- Set the text 'now' (not in the past).
- You are the author (you cannot imagine you are a middle-aged journalist, for example).
- Interviews: if you want to include one in a piece, the interview must be with a real person who you have interviewed.
- Speeches should be in a context that you could deliver, such as a TED talk or an address to fellow students.
- Biographies must be of a person who you have interviewed yourself. Think carefully about how you will re-shape the material gathered for the effects you aim to achieve stylistically or thematically.
- Memoirs must be about your own experiences.

## 4. Check an initial outline with your teacher

Topic	Journeys
Fiction	<i>The Life of Pi</i> : Yann Martell
Non-fiction	<i>The Lost Continent</i> (Travels in Small Town America): Bill Bryson
Task: fiction	Short story about a woman telling her granddaughter about emigrating to Britain
Task: non-fiction	Article for a student magazine about the advantages and disadvantages of a gap year spent travelling
Likely points for the commentary	Short story will have ambiguous ending (modelled on the Martell) Short story will make use of magic realism (modelled on the Martell) Article will contain humorous anecdotes that show the hardships of travelling on a shoestring (use Bryson's techniques to create humour in the anecdotes) Article will exploit cultural misunderstandings as a source of humour (as Bryson does with misunderstandings between UK and US English e/g/ 'pants').

## 5. Do the research and think about how to use your stimuli texts/style models

Find suitable style models: you will need several. They have to contain writing that is 'doing something' that interests you and which you want to try out or adapt in your own writing.

Good style models=good original writing!

Actively read and annotate your style models, making notes on:

- What techniques are the writers using?
- What effects are they having?
- How could I use similar effects or how could I achieve my chosen purpose using the techniques on show?
- Do I want to subvert expectations about the genre?

# 5. Do the research and think about how to use your style models

Refine your initial outline plan and sketch in what you anticipate being able to discuss in your commentary:

What kind of publication would your pieces be published in? (this can help to plan the style of your piece more precisely).

More precise details about what you want to achieve with the writing and who it is aimed at.

# 6. Planning & writing first drafts of your 2 pieces

1. Do a short plan for each of the pieces thinking about:

- The content you'll include
- Structure – remember your word count. Can you write the kind of text you're thinking about in that many words?
- Style features you plan to use

2. Write a first draft of each piece

- Have they turned out as you expected?
- Are they clearly targeted at your chosen audience and do they meet your intended function/purpose?
- Have they given you the chance to show off your writing skills?
- Will you have enough to say in your commentary?

**No, to any of these?**

You might want to go back to your plan for the coursework or your plans for each piece and make some adjustments.

# 7. First draft of commentary

**The key areas to be covered are:**

- an introduction referencing the topic and stimulus texts, providing a clear rationale for the choice of tasks
- an analysis of key characteristics of the text(s) which influenced your own writing
- an analysis of the significant linguistic and literary techniques you used in the crafting of the two creative tasks.

Ideally comparison of the two creative tasks should be integrated throughout the commentary. There is no specific formula for writing the commentary as each one should be different depending on the core text(s), the theme, chosen genres and the intentions of the writer.



# 7. First draft of commentary

**The main areas that all commentaries need to cover are:**

- genre, audience and purpose
- form, structure and language
- the relationship between your creative tasks and your stimulus texts.

**Avoid these pitfalls:**

- long explanations of the research you've done
- anecdotal accounts of what you have done to prepare to write your pieces
- long quotations from your stimulus texts
- too much focus on minor secondary stimulus material
- identifying literary and linguistic techniques but not effectively linking them to the specific use you've put them to in the creative tasks
- self-evaluation – e.g. 'I think I have been successful'.

## 8. Good working habits

1. Your teacher is likely to provide you with a set of rules, how to work & when to get to certain stages: follow them.
2. You must carefully reference all the secondary materials you use in your work right from the start to avoid plagiarism. See p. 26 of the [Getting Started Guide](#) for help.
3. You must save your coursework carefully in more than one place as you work, to avoid losing it all if your laptop dies, for example.
4. Use the spell and grammar checker on your work as you go.

# 9. Referencing

See p. 26 of the [Getting Started Guide](#) for help.

You need to **consistently** apply a recognised referencing system such as Harvard when referencing secondary material in your commentary.

You can, for example, use bracketed references in the body of the text to secondary material (Smith, p. 25) and provide full details of the text referred to in the bibliography. This is more efficient than using footnotes. Footnotes should not be used to 'expand the word count'.

# 10. What your teacher can and can't help you with

Usually, your teacher will only read your coursework **once** and provide **general feedback** once before you hand your final work to them for marking. The 'you' here is your teacher.

The [JCQ rules](#) (p. 8) state:

'If you give any assistance which goes beyond general advice, for example:

- provide detailed specific advice on how to improve drafts to meet the assessment criteria;
- give detailed feedback on errors and omissions which limits candidates' opportunities to show initiative themselves;
- intervene personally to improve the presentation or content of work;

then you must record this assistance and either take it into account when marking the work or submit it to the external examiner.'

# 11. Where you can find help on our website

Generally, the documents on the website are designed for teachers who use them to help you, but there is guidance you can look at to see if it helps you.

1. See p. 26 of the [Getting Started Guide](#) for help on how to do a bibliography. Also see the text examples and sample commentaries in this document.
2. [Student coursework planner and log](#).
3. [A Guide to Genre and Generic Conventions](#).

# Contact

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