

Getting Started September 2007

GCE English Literature

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in English Literature
(8ET01)

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Introduction

This Getting Started book will give you an overview of the GCE English Literature course and what it means for you and your students. The guidance in this book is intended to help you plan the course in outline and to give you further insight into the principles behind the content to help you and your students succeed.

Key principles

Developed in consultation with teachers and professional organisations, the new Edexcel GCE in English Literature specification supports teachers in new approaches to the teaching and study of English Literature, while valuing best practice.

The key aspects of the new GCE English Literature specification are summarised below.

Straightforward flexible structure

The specification builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at GCSE and allows teachers the flexibility to design a qualification to meet differing student interests and needs.

Supporting all students in achieving their full potential

- Clear progression from AS to A2 in content: at AS, the focus is on developing understanding of genres; at A2, study moves to independent interpretation and reflection
- Clear progression from AS to A2 in styles of assessment
- Open-text examinations.

Examination texts that engage and enthuse

- Extensive choice of texts to appeal to a variety of teachers and students
- Texts grouped for study in both traditional and fresh ways to offer a balance of familiar texts drawn from our literary heritage and texts that delight readers by being different, new and stimulating.

Coursework with freedom to explore individual interests

- Maximum freedom of text choice, including any Shakespeare play, for teachers at AS and A2
- Opportunity for both independent critical study and creative response to texts
- Examples and advice for all coursework tasks.

Assessment overview

The course will be assessed by both examination and internal assessment. In summary:

AS units

Unit 1: Explorations in prose and poetry	Unit 2: Explorations in drama
External assessment: written examination paper (2 hours, 15 minutes)	Internal assessment: coursework, two responses, maximum 2000-2500 words

A2 units

Unit 3: Interpretations of prose and poetry	Unit 4: Reflections in literary studies
External assessment: written examination paper (2 hours, 45 minutes)	Internal assessment: coursework, maximum 2500-3000 words



Course overview

This section gives you a summary of the content of each unit followed by a breakdown of the teaching content and skills development, and what these lead to in assessment in each unit. You will find this useful for planning staffing, for induction and for use as a basis of the schemes of work.

Unit 1: Explorations in Prose and Poetry

In this unit students will study the genres of prose and poetry. Groups of texts have been put together to draw out common or contrasting aspects.

Teaching content	Skills development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry chosen from a published collection • Prose chosen from grouped texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore techniques used in poetry and prose • Develop the skills of critical response to poetry and prose • Develop different approaches to the reading of texts.
<p>In order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge through response to short unseen texts or extracts • Explore connections between texts in the same genre. 	

Unit 2: Explorations in Drama

In this coursework unit students will explore drama texts and produce a coursework folder containing an explorative study and a creative critical response. They will study a play in detail, draw upon their knowledge of a further play(s) and/or explore relevant critical reception. This approach will enhance their ability to consider the contexts in which the texts were written and are received.

Teaching content	Skills development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free choice of three texts, two of which must be plays (including one Shakespeare play) • Consider the contexts in which the texts were written and received • Select reading to use as stimulus for own writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore techniques used in dramatic writing • Develop skills of critical response to drama • Develop skills as writers for different audiences and purposes.
<p>In order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce two pieces of work: a critical essay and a piece of creative critical writing. 	

Unit 3: Interpretations of Prose and Poetry

In this unit students will be expected to comment on unseen prose or poetry; their response will be informed by the reading skills they have developed through their course as a whole.

They will also compare and contrast texts from different genres. Their independent responses will be informed by an appreciation of the contexts in which texts are written and read and by the interpretations of other readers over time.

Teaching content	Skills development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prose and poetry, including post-1990 text(s) • Texts chosen from groupings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and apply skills from Unit 1 • Develop and apply awareness of how texts work from Unit 1 • Understand connections between texts and their contexts.
<p>In order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a critical, analytical approach to unseen extracts and to texts studied, exemplifying the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings • Show an appreciation of the contexts in which texts are written and read • Show awareness of the interpretations of other readers over time. 	

Unit 4: Reflections in Literary Studies

This coursework unit allows teachers and students free choice of texts, unrestrained by date requirements or genre, in order to undertake independent reading and research. The three texts chosen could include works of literary criticism or cultural commentary. Texts may be studied and tasks chosen for the group or the individual as appropriate to the centre.

Teaching content	Skills development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free choice of three texts • Choose suitable texts to provide stimulus for own research and response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and apply skills from Unit 2 • Develop and apply awareness of how texts work from Unit 1, 2 and 3 for either critical response or own reworking/transformation • Show evidence of independent research • Further develop critical skills • Supply references and bibliography (eg Harvard style).
<p>In order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce own extended writing or two shorter studies or one creative response with commentary. 	

Course planner

The flexibility of the new Edexcel GCE English Literature specification, with its 40 per cent emphasis on independent coursework and its development from the understanding of genres to independent interpretation and reflection, means that it can be delivered in many different ways. There are many different routes through the requirements of the subject depending on the specific needs of the students and the demands of the patterns of teaching and tutorial work involved.

This section has been developed to help you plan the organisation and delivery of the course. Two possible models for routes through the course are outlined below. Model 1 and Model 2 could be delivered alongside each other in a large centre, for maximum flexibility.

AS English Literature

Model 1

In model 1, term 1 is used for the delivery of Unit 1, leading to the assessment in January. Terms 2 and 3 focus on coursework development and supply opportunities for revisiting poetry and prose for a June resit if required, or beginning reading preparation for A2.

Term 1	Assessment	Term 2	Term 3	Assessment	Post assessment
Unit 1 Prose	January Unit 1 exam	Unit 2 Drama	Unit 2 Drama	June Unit 2 Drama coursework	Reading for A2 Unit 3
Unit 1 Poetry		Unit 1 Prose revisited or Unit 2 Drama	Unit 1 Poetry revisited or reading for A2		June Unit 1 resit exam

Model 2

In model 2, the main focus of term 1 is Unit 2 to ensure January submission of coursework. This can either be for assessment purposes, or as an internal deadline in large centres to ensure that part of terms 2 and 3 can be used to mark and moderate Unit 2 work for assessment in June.

Term 1	Assessment	Term 2	Term 3	Assessment	Post assessment
Unit 2 Drama	January Unit 2 coursework	Unit 1 Poetry	Unit 1 Poetry	June Unit 1 exam	Reading for A2 Unit 3
Unit 1 Prose		Unit 1 Prose	Unit 2 coursework revisited or Unit 1 Prose or reading for A2		June Unit 2 coursework resit

A2 English Literature

Model 1

In model 1, term 1 is used for the delivery of Unit 3, leading to the assessment in January. Terms 2 and 3 focus on coursework development and supply opportunities for revisiting poetry and prose for a June resit if required.

Term 1	Assessment	Term 2	Term 3	Assessment
Unit 3 Unprepared Poetry and Prose (Section A)	January Unit 3 exam	Unit 4 coursework	Unit 4 coursework	June Unit 4 coursework
Unit 3 Prose and Poetry (Section B)		Unit 3 Poetry revisited or Unit 4 coursework	Unit 3 Prose revisited and/or Unit 1 revisited and/or Unit 2 revisited	

Model 2

In model 2, the main focus of term 1 is Unit 4 to ensure January submission of coursework. This can either be for assessment purposes, or as an internal deadline in large centres to ensure that part of terms 2 and 3 can be used to mark and moderate Unit 4 work for assessment in June.

Term 1	Assessment	Term 2	Term 3	Assessment
Unit 4 coursework	January Unit 4 coursework	Unit 3 Unprepared Poetry and Prose (Section A)	Unit 3 Unprepared Poetry and Prose (Section A)	June Unit 3 exam
Unit 3 Poetry and Prose (Section B)		Unit 3 Prose and Poetry (Section B) or Unit 4 coursework revisited	Unit 3 Unprepared Poetry and Prose (Section B)	

Planning the course for fast-track students

The flexibility of the new specification also makes it suitable for more mature students meeting once or perhaps twice a week on a course scheduled to last one or possibly two years (one year to AS level).

Students studying AS or A level English Literature should find this specification particularly helpful and supportive in that it allows them multiple assessment opportunities.

Every unit is assessed in both January and June, allowing plenty of opportunities for resits.



Approaches to texts: Unit 1

In this unit students explore prose and poetry, looking at common and contrasting aspects of the genres. They study conventions of writing poetry as well as critical appreciation, with reference to one selection of poems from a choice of three published collections. They also read one core literary heritage novel and one further novel or novella, studying the use writers make of narrative in prose, alongside critical appreciation of the novels.

The examination for this unit is structured as follows:

- Section A: short questions on either unseen poetry or unseen prose
- Section B: essay question on poetry
- Section C: essay question on prose.

Many centres now have time between GCSEs and AS when students can be introduced to the AS texts; using that time to begin preparation for section A of this unit. Selecting a range of poems and prose extracts to look at can be an opportunity to explore a wide variety of styles and writers.

There are a number of potential ways of organising the delivery of Unit 1. For example, teaching the unseen text for Section A could be used as an introduction to teaching the genres of poetry and prose in greater detail for Sections B and C; or the collection selected for Section B could be used for the teaching of shorter poems for Section A.

Short-answer questions in Section A

The short-answer approach in Section A of Unit 1 is an innovative approach to GCE Literature assessment. It is intended to enhance progression from GCSE to AS and from AS to A2, providing a structured approach to the teaching of the key features of poetry and prose that are essential aspects of the study of literature. Students are asked to identify and comment on literary features such as imagery, narrative voice, dialogue and rhyme, and explain their use in unseen texts. This focused testing of what they have learned by the end of the AS year offers them opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in a direct, straightforward way. There are no catches or surprises; students will be rewarded for showing knowledge and applying it thoughtfully.

The short-answer questions are closely linked to Sections B and C of the paper, which call for more conventional written essays. In preparing for the Section B and C questions on their texts, they will be helped by their reading and analysis of texts in preparation for Section A. Likewise, their work on the set texts should be a key element in developing their understanding of the concepts tested in Section A.

Poetry

Section A

If you choose to use the poetry collection selected for Section B for teaching the shorter poems for Section A, there is the potential to examine the vast variety of features of the genre.

For example, you may decide to study the use of the sonnet form in 'The Candle Indoors' (*Here to Eternity*) in the 'Home' category and how it helps enhance the poet's message. It would be useful to compare how homes make poets feel sad or unhappy, comparing Larkin's 'Home is so Sad' with Tennyson's 'From In Memoriam'. Other poems could be selected from other sections of the poetry collection such as Earle Birney's 'Curacao'. This would enable students to examine the use of the form and how it emphasises attitude, and the use of the language and how this helps put across mood and atmosphere.

The focus should be on form and the devices used, as this will be the main focus of Section A questions. Students will find it useful to hear readings of the poems, so you may wish to prepare readings and possibly performances of them. A more creative approach could include writing poems in a similar style or on a similar theme and exploring the poetic form this way.

What to look for in a poem

Obvious questions that students might ask at the beginning of Unit 1 are: What are the key features of a poem? What makes a typical poem? An introduction to poetry can explore these issues, using a wide range of poetry from the collection you choose for Section B.

Teaching should focus on, for example:

- Type: sonnets, verses, poems, ballads
- Voice: the creation of a persona or perspective
- Form and structure: stanza, rhythm, rhyme, couplets, sonnets
- Imagery: similes, metaphors
- Language choice: the collocation and connotation and the use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, sibilance, assonance
- Rhyme and rhythm
- Tone and mood: the poet's use of the voice of the poem to suggest a point of view or attitude; the poet's use of language and imagery to create atmosphere
- Genre analysis.



Section B

The poems studied for Section B will be much longer, in general, than those set for assessment in Section A.

Poems can be studied in groups where specific attitudes linking to the overall topic can be identified such as:

- poems that celebrate where the poet lives
- poems that express a negative attitude about where the poet lives
- poems that show the land as neglected
- poems that show the land as something special
- poems that show the land as linking to memories.

For example, Section B question 4(a) from the Sample Assessment Material asks:

'Poets often use poetry to celebrate where they live.'

Compare and contrast at least two poems in the light of this statement.

In answering this question, candidates should not just draw on similarities between texts, but look for differences in how poets celebrate the land. Preparation should therefore include examining what similarities and differences poems have on main themes, whether it be in terms of form and devices or in message conveyed. Poems which celebrate the land may include 'Bermudas', 'How Old Mountains Drip with Sunset' and 'Nutting' (from *The Rattle Bag*). Each can be compared on the level of form and the interesting uses of it, particularly in 'How Old Mountains Drip with Sunset' compared to the other poems. Use of language can also be assessed as to how it enhances mood and atmosphere and what the poet is trying to say.

Prose

Section A and Section C

To prepare students for answering questions in Section A on unseen prose and in Section C on prose texts, you will need to teach key aspects of the way narratives work and the choices writers make in writing narratives.

The questions in Section A will address these key aspects directly, giving students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by applying it to an unseen text. The groups of texts set for Section C can provide many opportunities to teach these but teachers will need to add to this other examples of a wide range of different kinds of narrative, to help develop students' understanding of the range of choices available to writers.

Texts that will help to develop students' knowledge and understanding of narrative include:

- the Section C texts
- shorter narratives, such as fairytales, picture books, mini-sagas, short stories and novellas
- openings, endings and other extracts from longer narratives
- prior reading of narratives, such as picture books, children's books, teenage fiction, popular fiction
- a spectrum of text extracts from 19th-century classic realist narratives, through to experimental, postmodernist narratives, including both popular fiction and literary texts.

What to look for in narrative

You may want to develop your own checklist of major aspects of narrative as a framework for teaching. This will ensure that students have addressed key features of narrative and will feel confident in their ability to apply that knowledge to an unseen text and draw on that knowledge in their examination answers for Section C.

This checklist below is an advisory list of aspects of narrative that you may want to teach but it should not, of course, prevent you from adding your own ideas.

Narrative structure

- Openings and endings
- Frame stories
- Stories told in letters
- Narratives clearly divided into sections
- Narratives that avoid conventional structures
- Narratives using more than one point of view
- The handling of time
- Motifs as a device for structuring the narrative.

Narrative and chronological time

- The difference between narrative time and chronological time
- Use of flashbacks
- Use of foreshadowing
- Shifts in tense to create immediacy or change the mood; for instance, the use of the present tense for impact.



Narrative voice

- The different uses writers make of first-person and third-person voices, including free indirect style, stream of consciousness and the omniscient third-person narrator
- Shifts between these voices in any one narrative
- The unreliable narrator
- The difference between narrator's and author's perspective.

Use of speech

- The extent of dialogue as compared with narration
- The marking of dialogue
- The use of direct speech and reported speech
- The use of speech to convey character
- The use of dialects and evocation of different voices.

Prose style

- Characteristic use of sentence length and structure
- Balance of dialogue and narration
- Use of monosyllabic or polysyllabic vocabulary
- Formal or informal style?
- More like speech or writing?
- Use of dialect or standard English.

Use of images, symbols and motifs

- The characteristics of images, symbols and motifs
- Their purposes
- Their effect upon the narration.

Genre

- Conventions of different genres and how the writer has chosen to use them, ignore them, extend them or subvert them.

Teaching aspects of narrative

Here are some approaches to teaching how narratives work:

- Use the Section C texts to look closely at how key aspects of narrative are being used. Make comparisons between the choices made in the texts chosen for study.
- Introduce other texts, or extracts from texts, that demonstrate a range of different choices. For instance, you might read the opening of the core text for Section C alongside several other openings of novels to explore how narrative openings work.
- Use short texts to introduce key ideas, such as the text of a picture book to introduce the idea of narrative structure, or a fairytale to teach about generic conventions.
- Rewrite short bits of the Section C texts, or additional short texts, to explore the difference it makes to change an element of the narrative; for example, rewriting a paragraph as third-person narrative.
- Model the analysis of aspects of narrative, by looking together on an OHP or an electronic whiteboard at small extracts of Section C and other texts to introduce key concepts and explore the use of narrative devices.

An activity introducing aspects of prose style

This could be a 20-minute activity at the start of a lesson where you go on to look more closely at the prose style of your core text in Section C, perhaps focusing on a few short extracts taken from different points in the text.

Ask students to read the opening paragraphs from three different novels, such as:

- *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter
- *Make Lemonade* by Virginia Euwer Wolff
- *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway

From these first sentences alone, ask students what they can say about the prose style and what that suggests about the likely nature of the narrative. You might want to focus their attention on the following areas:

- **Sentence length and structure.** For example, Carter's opening is one long and elaborate single sentence that crams in more and more ideas. Wolff's opening uses a sentence structure and layout that isn't conventional and sounds more like a spoken voice than a written narrative. Hemingway uses mainly compound sentences, statements of fact and description to describe action and setting. As compared with Carter, it is quite direct and uncomplicated, and suggests a plain, unadorned prose style.



- **Vocabulary (lexis or diction).** For example, Carter's vocabulary is lush and literary, with Latinate and polysyllabic words, such as 'impeccable' and 'quietude' and words drawn from the lexical field of old-fashioned trains and journeys, which allow the writer to establish the idea of the train journey as an metaphor for the move from girlhood to womanhood and marriage. Compared with this, Wolff's opening is much more conversational and simple, with words drawn from everyday contexts and quite generalised vocabulary. Even when a bird is described it is generalised – a bird, rather than a pigeon, or sparrow or seagull. Hemingway uses vocabulary from the lexical field of landscapes but unlike Carter, his words are mainly plain and monosyllabic and are not used metaphorically but in simple description of exactly what can be seen, with few embellishments and no metaphorical language.
- **Sentence types (statements, questions, exclamations, commands).** For instance, both Carter and Hemingway's openings are fairly conventional in being written in the form of statements, whereas Wolff's includes a question, seemingly addressed to the reader. This 2nd person address adds to the conversational tone of the writing.

These differences in prose style in the openings of the narratives suggest quite different styles of writing and approaches to narrative. Focusing on just a tiny extract in this way can make students more sensitive to variations in prose style in general.

Carter's is characteristic of her lush accumulation of detail, piling on allusions and imagery in a highly wrought style. It has something of the feel of a 19th-century novel in its sentence structure but taken to a point beyond the conventional and into something more elaborate and playful.

Wolff's is a conversational, first person narrative, which tries to create a sense of the spoken voice of a young girl. This prose style, breaking the conventions of sentence layout, or breaking with conventional spelling or grammar in order to evoke a spoken voice, or highly individual first person voice, is found in many modern narratives, such as *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* or *Vernon God Little*.

Hemingway's opening is characteristic of his spare, direct, simple prose style, in which telling what happened and allowing the reader to make causal links and inferences, is preferred over complex sentences analysing motivation and attitudes.

Approaches to texts: Unit 3

This is a synoptic unit in which students have the opportunity to display all the skills they have acquired in reading, interpreting and responding critically to texts while they have been studying for both AS and A2.

The examination for Unit 3 is structured as follows:

- Section A: one question on either unprepared prose or unprepared poem
- Section B: one question on at least two prescribed texts, from a choice of prose and poetry.

It is important to understand the rationale behind how texts are to be studied and used. Three texts are to be prepared, but students are free to use only two in the exam (provided that at least one was first published post-1990) if that approach suits their answer. In preparing three texts, you may decide that one is prepared with a lighter touch, and may therefore not go for a line-by-line, page-by-page approach but instead see how this text sits alongside and illuminates points that could be made about the others.

The best-prepared students will be those who are confident about using their knowledge of the texts, making cross-references and being prepared to apply what they know to new situations.

While three texts must be studied and at least two referred to in a response to the exam question, three texts are not necessarily better than two; it all depends on how well they are used and students will not be penalised for referring to only two of their three texts.

Section A

Unprepared critical appreciation, or 'the unseen' remains essential to assessment at this level. Students can show how they are able to apply the skills acquired in preparation for the unseen element of Unit 1 and extend them into an independent exploration and critical response to a given poem or passage of prose.

Choice is not determined by the texts studied in Section B and it is strongly recommended, as in Unit 1, that students prepare for both options, thereby widening their experience and increasing their confidence as readers.

Practice material may be drawn from the poetry collection used for Unit 1; passages can be extracted from set novels before they have been studied. Students can be invited to select passages/poems from their own reading for group discussion and analysis, and in this way gain assurance in their own authority as readers, seeing the critical appreciation as an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and perception rather than as something to fear. In this way, preparation for this part of the examination becomes, as it should, an integral part of the course as a whole.



Section B

There is a deliberate emphasis on the modern reader and a requirement that at least one of the texts studied must have been published after 1990. Students will study three texts from one of the four thematic groupings and will choose one question from two available.

Each question will consist of a reader's comment; for example: 'War is never an old subject because each new writer and each new reader finds something new.' The student is then asked as a modern reader to explore connections and comparisons between the texts they have studied in the light of this comment.

They will also need to demonstrate that they understand that different readers at different times will have had different responses.

The questions require reference to 'at least two texts' in establishing connections and comparisons. While students will take copies of all three texts into the examination room, individual students may decide that the focus of their argument requires little or only passing reference to their third text. This is a perfectly acceptable approach, stemming as it does from the way in which the texts have been studied.

It is not envisaged that all three texts will have been studied in the same depth and detail. The groupings offer the opportunity for a variety of approaches: one might, for example, wish to begin 'Identifying Self' by a detailed reading of *Great Expectations* and move out from that to looking at particular connections that could be made with one of the post-1990 novels and either a modern poet or Chaucer.

Alternatively, there is scope to focus entirely on modern writing in this section. You may decide that the 'Identifying Self', 'Journeys' and 'War' groupings lend themselves particularly to this. This flexibility is intended to encourage students to explore textual connections and appreciate the variety of possible readings.

This is a 2 hour 45 minute examination. It would seem sensible for students to plan to spend an hour, but not much more, on the unseen and to devote the rest of the time to the textual comparison. It is important that they plan carefully; the best answers are likely to be produced by students who have spent at least 10 to 15 minutes on planning each answer.

Moving on from explorations

At AS, the title of Unit 1 was **Explorations** in Prose and Poetry. In Unit 3, the title **Interpretations** of Poetry and Prose marks a significant move in expectations. At the top end, answers might be expected to do some of the following:

- Show awareness of a variety of interpretations.
- Apply an open-minded approach when exploring and evaluating the texts.
- Make an independent, original and creative approach evident in the presentation of ideas.
- Demonstrate a synthesis of textual connections in developing a line of argument.

Variety of interpretations: interpretations are suggestions; the best answers are likely to be the ones that without being unduly tentative suggest that a text *could* mean this, not dogmatically state that *this* is the single meaning. Texts have meanings, plural.

An open-minded approach is therefore shown by the best answers and that open-mindedness will be indicated in a student's response to the quotation that is usually supplied with the question. Their approach to the comment may not be straightforward, absolute agreement. The comment in question 4(b) in the sample material says that readers have to be personally involved in order to want to read more; in question 5(b) there is a quotation from a reader demanding gritty realism that can be touched and felt. These statements are clearly assertions, based on a particular reader's point of view, not statements of truth for all time, and the best answers will treat them appropriately.

Evaluating the texts: an answer that can write about how effectively a text operates is displaying this skill. Often the quoted comments themselves invite evaluation directly with such statements, as in question 5(a) in the sample material which asserts that 'the most interesting works of Literature are a wake-up call'.

Independent original and creative approaches: it is unlikely that students, within the constraints of an exam, will think up something new to English Literature here, but the best answers should give the impression of someone making sense of their texts anew, in the light of a given statement, not simply repeating what has been taught to them.

This sense of freshness is also part of the notion of **synthesis** — a fresh pulling together of ideas to create something new. This again is a quality that might be looked for in the very best answers.



Internal Assessment Guide

This section provides you with advice and guidance on the two internally assessed units of the specification, Unit 2 and Unit 4.

Unit 2: Explorations In Drama

In this AS unit, teachers and students will explore and compare drama texts in a variety of ways, looking both at the contexts in which the texts were produced and at their critical reception. Students will have opportunities to be writers, reviewers and critics of texts. There is a free choice in choosing plays and in combining texts in interesting ways.

The unit is designed to cover the requirements of the AS specification for students to study a play by Shakespeare and a further play written between 1300 and 1800. The requirement for a third text to be studied will allow students to dip into another text (such as critical reviews or extracts from other writers) to support their work.

Assessment is by means of a coursework folder which will contain **two** pieces of writing:

- Explorative Study
- Creative Critical Response.

Coursework is worth 40 per cent of the AS assessment and preparation for it should therefore represent a substantial part of the student's experience of AS.

The coursework folder

The two written pieces need not be of equal length: the folder should be a maximum of 2000-2500 words, including quotations. The specification gives some examples of possible coursework titles.

Explorative Study

The idea here is that one drama text is studied in some depth and another drama text, perhaps less fully treated, is used to provide contrast, comparison or illumination. A further text which represents critical or cultural comment should be used in the response. The key to this piece is that it should allow students to demonstrate their ability to **explore** connections and **comparisons** between different texts and their understanding of the significance of the **contexts** in which texts are written and received.

Creative Critical Response

This piece should, with teacher guidance, allow students to consider **what it means to be a critic** and to develop a **confident personal response** to texts, their contexts and their critical reception. The skills that students develop in producing this piece should begin to prepare them for the independent reading and research coursework unit at A2.

Sample coursework tasks

The examples below give three possible approaches to selecting texts that work well together and to setting appropriate tasks.

Example 1

Explorative Study: Students study Jonson's *Volpone* as a central text and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is used to explore how the dramatists approach characterisation. Students focus on Mosca, Celia and another character of their choice from *Twelfth Night*.

Creative Critical Response: Students read extracts from Gary Waller's *Shakespeare's Comedies* with a focus on feminist readings. They then write their own feminist reading of Jonson's *Volpone*, suitable for publication in the *eMagazine* for A level students.

Example 2

Explorative Study: Students study Shakespeare's *Henry V* as a central text and read Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* in order to explore the ways writers approach issues of rank through drama.

Creative Critical Response: Students watch Jonathan Miller's adaptation of *The Beggar's Opera* for the BBC (1983) and write a review of it, using their knowledge of the play, for the Guardian Unlimited website.

Example 3

Explorative Study: Students study Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is used to provide comparison in a study of the dramatic heroine.

Creative Critical Response: Students download and listen to a podcast review *Woman's Hour – Women's Roles in Jacobean Drama* (Herman/Hopkins). They then write a script for a podcast for a student intranet, debating the appropriateness of *The Duchess of Malfi* as a text suitable for A level study in the 21st century.

Assessment of the unit

The coursework folder should be a maximum of 2000–2500 words and is worth 80 marks. It should be marked as a whole using the two assessment criteria grids according to the four Assessment Objectives.

- AO1: Students are required to 'articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression' **15%**.
- AO2: Students are required to 'demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in literary texts' **10%**.
- AO3: Students are required to 'explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts, informed by interpretations of other readers' **45%**.
- AO4: Students are required to 'demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received' **30%**.

When designing tasks for assessment, centres are reminded of the need to ensure that these weightings are reflected in the tasks set. AO1 and AO2 are applied to both tasks; AO3 and AO4 have important roles in the explorative task: AO3: Explore connections and comparisons between different texts informed by interpretations of other readers; AO4: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

Choosing texts

It is intended that teachers and students will have a wide choice of options when choosing texts for this unit. The main focus is on **drama between 1300 and 1800**: this is not 'the Shakespeare unit' and it is perfectly possible that the main text chosen for study will not be a Shakespeare play. Choices should reflect the needs and interests of the students and the availability of texts in centres. Given that there is no expectation that all three texts will be studied in depth, this may be the time to think creatively about how to use texts that are already in the department store cupboard.

Having selected the play which will be studied in depth, you will have to choose **a second play** for study which will allow students opportunities to compare and contrast the texts and to explore connections between them. It makes sense that the plays are linked in some way, either by theme or topic or by some other contextual link. It may be that students will study two Shakespeare plays. It is not expected that students will study the second play in the same depth as the central text.

The third text should be seen as an **illuminator text**: one that allows students ways in to their drama texts. It could be a piece of published criticism or a text that represents the views of other readers.

The following books are suggestions for third texts:

- Shapiro, J., 2006. *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*. Faber.
- Ackroyd, P., 2006. *Shakespeare: The Biography*. Vintage.
- Wells, S., 2006. *Shakespeare and Co*. Allen Lane.
- Nuttall, A. D., 2007. *Shakespeare the Thinker*. Yale University Press.
- Bryson, B., 2007. *Shakespeare: The World of the Stage (Eminent Lives)*. Harper Press.

Studying drama

Students will have had a varied experience of studying plays in their centres. Some will have covered a range of drama, from Shakespeare to works by contemporary playwrights; some will have watched plays on stage or screen; others may have had more limited experience. Most, however, will be familiar with the basics of drama: soaps, television plays, drama documentaries and films all share many characteristics with stage plays.

In the coursework folder, students are expected to 'articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression' (AO1), and to 'demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in texts' (AO2).

To help students meet these objectives, it's important to provide opportunities for them to consider a range of drama conventions:

What are the features that we expect to find in most plays?

- Narrative dimension — plot
- Dialogue
- Stage directions
- Structure — beginning, middle and end — action
- Tensions and conflicts
- Climax or crisis
- Denouement — closure
- Exploration of relationships
- Development of themes
- Performance — staging
- Use of language.

Exploring contexts

For the majority of students, the explicit study of contexts will be a new experience. They may previously have done work on Shakespeare but will not necessarily have experience of other plays produced between 1300 and 1800, and their contextual understanding be not be much developed.

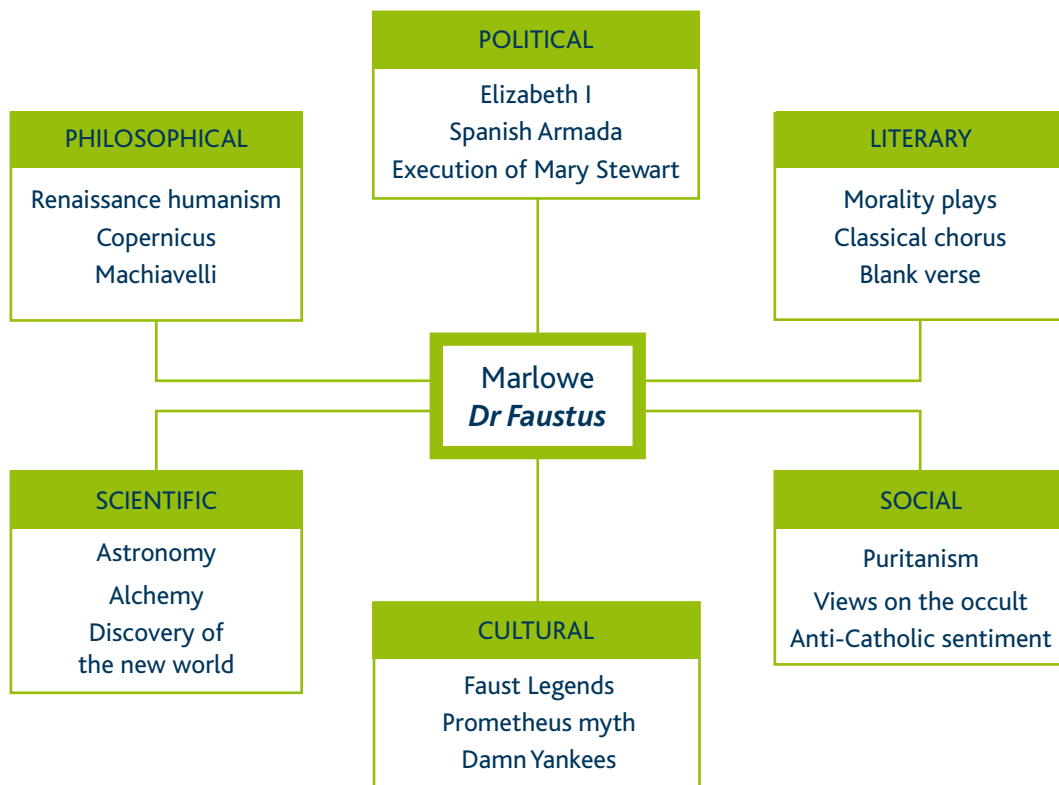
In the coursework folder, students are expected to 'demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.' (AO4)

To assist students in meeting this objective, help them establish a broad overview of developments in drama from 1300 to 1800 and locate chosen texts in their historical and social contexts:

What were the major developments in drama from 1300 to 1800?

- Medieval — mystery plays; morality plays
- Renaissance — Shakespeare — comedies, tragedies, histories — Marlowe; Jonson; Webster
- Restoration — Dryden — heroic drama — Wycherley; Etherege; Congreve; Behn — Restoration comedy
- 18th century — sentimental comedy; Goldsmith; Sheridan; Fielding; John Gay — satire — opera — rise of popular entertainment.

This diagram shows how the study of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* could be linked to its historical and social contexts.



Being a critic

Students will have some limited experience of offering independent critical views and of reading and evaluating the views of other readers. This unit should develop student skills in these areas and should also prepare students for the free-choice reading and research coursework unit at A2.

In the coursework folder, students are expected to 'explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts, informed by interpretations of other readers.' (AO3)

To help students meet this objective, encourage them to compare and contrast drama texts, by dipping into a range of texts, which might include film or television productions, and signpost significant critical responses for students to evaluate.

What does it mean to be a critic?

'A good drama critic is one who perceives what is happening in the theatre of his time. A great drama critic also perceives what is not happening.'

Kenneth Tynan

Starting points for critical sources:

Literary Criticism

Charles Lamb; Samuel Taylor Coleridge; William Hazlitt; Samuel Johnson; Wilson Knight; F. R. Leavis; Frank Kermode; Terry Eagleton; Catherine Belsey; Stephen Greenblatt; Andrew Gurr; Jonathan Bate; *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Contemporary Critics And Commentators

Michael Billington; Benedict Nightingale; Brian Woolland; Michael Coveney; Laura Mulvey.

arts.guardian.co.uk

www.rsc.org.uk

www.contemporarywriters.com (British Council)

www.arts4schools.com

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts

www.telegraph.co.uk/arts

<http://arts.independent.co.uk>

www.britishtheatreguide.org.uk

www.peopleplay.org.uk

www.englishandmedia.co.uk

www.thestage.co.uk

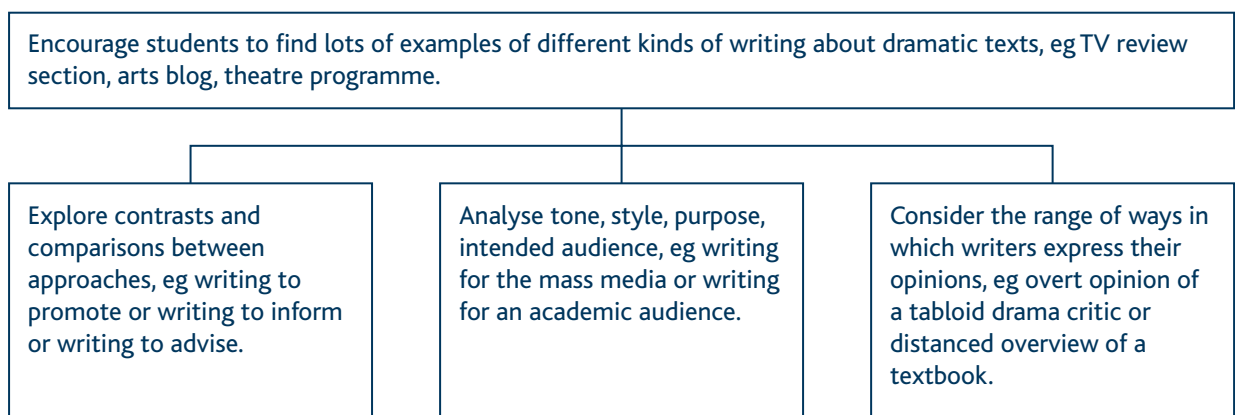
www.encoretheatremagazine.co.uk

Writing creatively

Students may be used to writing in a variety of styles for different audiences from their GCSE English course, but the challenge in this AS unit is to write both creatively and critically about drama texts. Students are being asked to put themselves in the position of different readers and to write confidently about plays and other texts they have studied.

In the coursework folder, students are expected to 'articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression' (AO1), and to 'demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in texts' (AO2).

Preparing for creative tasks



Style sources for creative critical writing

Blogs; broadsheet theatre reviews; directors' notes; scripts for public talks; arts websites; theatre programme notes; TV and radio discussions; letters to the editor; school magazine; TV and radio trailers; academic papers; podcasts; promotional literature.

Unit 4: Reflections in Literary Studies

In this synoptic A2 unit, you and your students have a free choice of texts, unrestrained by date requirements or genre. Students are required to study three texts, and to undertake independent reading and research to produce a coursework folder, which will take the form of one extended study **or** two shorter studies **or** a creative response with commentary.

You will decide your own methods of delivering the chosen material, balancing as appropriate the opportunities offered by class, small group and independent learning. The time that you allocate during the year to this unit will depend upon a number of factors, but be aware that with the new specifications comes the recognition of the important part coursework can play in encouraging independent reading, focused research and the synoptic assessment of the subject. Much will depend on the decisions made by centres about the degree of differentiation as to text and task encouraged within the student cohort.

The coursework folder

The coursework should reflect study of at least three texts, which may be related to each other in any appropriate way. When preparing for this unit, students should focus on one text in detail. The coursework may draw upon particular interests sparked by earlier units in the course, although reference to particular texts studied earlier should be seen as additional to the three studied for this unit.

An extended study

If you choose the option of one extended study, you can initially focus students' work on one text, and through the task explore a key theme or aspect of genre, for example, which develops the focus across other texts by the same author, or others.

Two shorter studies

You can approach the option of two shorter studies in any way you wish. This option might well provide an opportunity to cover two different aspects of a chosen author, period or genre.

Creative response with commentary

This approach will emerge from the reading that students undertake, within particular genres, periods or authors. Note that it is the independent reading and research and the commentary which form the key processes, and that the creative writing is not the major piece of work in this option.



Sample coursework tasks

The examples below give two possible approaches to selecting texts that work well together and to setting appropriate tasks.

Example 1

Political responses: Students focus on texts which in various ways highlight the often difficult relationship between politics and literature.

Students read two intense drama texts such as Tom Stoppard's *Professional Foul* and Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*. Students then consider a range of recent political critical comment and choose where to focus their coursework response.

Example 2

Literature and autobiography: Students focus on the presentation of self in a range of texts and its relationship with autobiography. Texts include Ted Hughes' *Birthday Letters* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. Students then consider a range of critical comment and choose where to focus their coursework response.

Assessment of the unit

The coursework folder should be a maximum of 2500-3000 words including quotations and is worth 80 marks. It should be marked as a whole according to the four Assessment Objectives which have equal weighting within this unit.

- AO1: Students are required to 'articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression'.
- AO2: Students are required to 'demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in literary texts'.
- AO3: Students are required to 'explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts, informed by interpretations of other readers'.
- AO4: Students are required to 'demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received'.

For AO3, the range of possible connections and comparisons is wide, and the research undertaken should enable students to explore this. The task itself should focus on particular opportunities offered by the chosen texts.

Students should understand that the contextualising of the chosen texts, through a range of different types of material, is an important part of the unit. Centres should plan to relate their coverage of AO4 to the idea of literary connections and critical reception outlined in AO3.

Skills

The Assessment Objectives provide a clear overview of the demands of the unit. However, you may also wish to consider ways in which you can map the demands of the unit in relation to other units. The skills outlined below apply to all three coursework options, although of course the balance between them depends on the particular demands of the chosen option.

In this unit there is freedom of choice of texts and topics. Students at this level need to focus, organise and prioritise throughout their period of research. The need to explore connections between the chosen texts in a number of ways requires students to understand and handle concepts with confidence. The establishment of a clear focus and argument in all three options demands an ability both to develop an overview of the work and to establish clear links between ideas and texts. Research skills are a central component of this unit and you may wish to refresh your students' understanding of the demands of research at this level.

Approaches to teaching the unit

There are many different approaches that can be taken to teaching this unit but the central focus is signposted by its title: students are encouraged to take a reflective view of their work over the entire course, to stand back, make judgements and develop links. The key ideas are:

- the exploring of **connections** between texts of similar and/or different genres
- the idea of literary **studies** rather than a textual comparison alone, prompting students to contextualise and examine their chosen texts with a wider focus
- **reflections** suggesting the need to stand back from the texts, to develop a considered **interpretation** of their reading
- the **independent** nature of the work suggesting not only the need for focused research but also the challenge to develop an engaged response which is contained within the free choice of this unit.

Choosing an approach

When choosing an approach for this unit, you could decide to focus initially on a range of possible aspects:

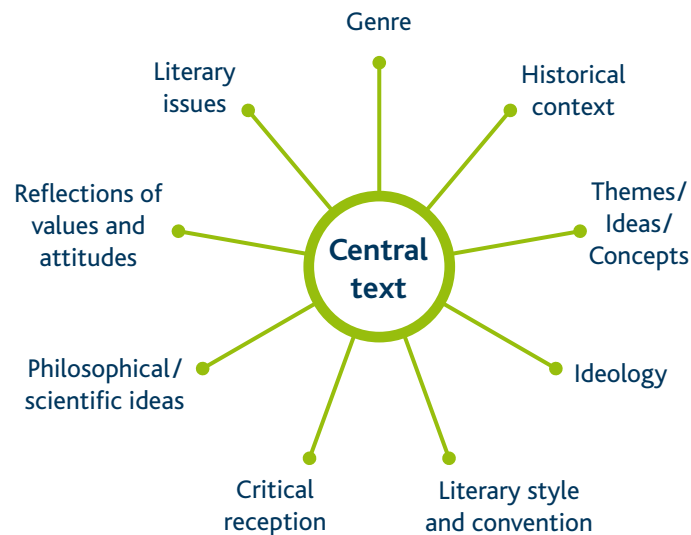
- a central text
- a genre
- an author
- a literary movement
- a subject or topic
- a literary form, technique or convention
- a literary issue.

Choosing texts

The free choice of text in this unit should allow you to develop coursework activities which respond to the interests and abilities of your students, the particular interests of the teaching staff and the availability of texts.

Students will study one text in detail, drawing upon their knowledge of further text(s). The additional text(s) may be works of literary criticism or cultural commentary. Additional texts of all types (including film, websites, podcasts etc) can form part of the research undertaken by the students.

Ways to link texts



Beyond comparisons

Students will begin with their central text from which they will select an aspect which merits further study. They will put together a proposition and identify sources of further reading and research to explore their proposition.

Critical perspectives

To use critical material, students could:

- explore critical responses to a text, an author or a type of text over a period of time.
- focus on a particular controversy which surrounded a text (or group of texts) at a particular point in literary history.
- explore texts using an ideological framework (using perhaps feminist or new historicist approaches).

Students should show awareness and understanding of the ways in which texts have been received by a range of different audiences. Students should have explored a range of critical material in other units, and in particular in Unit 2. This might well include the work of academic critics, but may also involve the professional reviewer or 'the reader' (as in diary entries which comment upon reading and theatre productions). This aspect of the AO should be seen not as an add-on part of the task, as a process undertaken largely to support the student's own interpretations, but rather as an integral part of the whole approach encouraged by this unit. It applies equally to all three options.



Literary issues

Students can use literary issues as a way of organising their research, reading and the focus for their coursework task. The reading and research may well include texts which although not literary are related to the production and evaluation of texts.

Creative option

All students will have some experience of this option through the creative critical aspect of Unit 2. In this unit, students are encouraged to consider the creative option as part of a programme of research and independent reading. Students should then reflect on their range of reading and ensure that they have documented their responses carefully before considering the task itself. Please see the Framework for Writing Commentary in the specification.

The student's exploration of their chosen genre, text(s) and author(s) can lead to a range of possible outcomes. In each case, the writing will be fully supported by the commentary which should clearly explore the links between the student's reading and research and the creative piece. In particular, the commentary should show the student's awareness of audience, register, tone, genre and literary conventions.

Possible explorations:

- a response to particular aspects of style through parody
- a bringing together of different genres (as in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* or Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*)
- a rethinking of narrative voice or persona
- a re-presentation for a different audience of literary material.

Acknowledging and referring to sources

The advice below is designed for you to share with your students.

You need to acknowledge the work of others when you make reference to it in your coursework. This reference may be a direct quotation, or it may refer to ideas that you have come across in your reading.

The referencing system suggested here is the **Harvard System**, which is used in most higher education institutes. You can find out more here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_referencing.

You do not need to put together very lengthy bibliographies or make constant references to theorists in the field. **Only relevant references need to be made.**

How to make references to the work of others

If you are referring to the author by name, put the date of the publication in brackets after the name. For example:

Reah (2002) says that 'The headline is a unique type of text.'

If do not name the author as you refer to what they have said, put the author's name and date at a suitable point in the section. For example:

Newspaper readers do not have as clear a profile as individual newspapers like to suggest (Reah 2002).

If you are including something from published work in your own work, you must put the quoted text in quote marks and, if it is several lines long, separate it from your own text by indentation. Acknowledge the quotation and give a page number so that a reader of your work can trace the quote directly. For example:

On the matter of manipulation of opinion, Reah (2002, p. 85) says

'These depictions detract from the serious news issues and turn these tragedies of both individuals and of our society into "stories".'

How to write a bibliography

A bibliography must support student responses. List the books or articles you have referred to in your work, as well as any books or articles that you have used in the course of your research that have given you ideas or influenced your opinions. These should be listed in alphabetic order by the author's surname.

Books

When you list books, include the following:

- author(s) surname(s) and initials
- year of publication of edition used
- full title of book
- edition of book
- place of publication.



The examples below show how you should write your references for one, two or more authors:

Reah, D., 2002. *The Language of Newspapers*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Carter, R. and Long, M. N., 1987. *The Web of Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carter, R., et al, 2001. *Working With Texts*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Chapters of edited books

For chapters of edited books, give the following information:

- chapter author(s) surname(s) and initials
- year of publication of chapter
- title of chapter
- initials surname of editor, with 'ed.' after the last name
- book details as above.

For example:

Fishman, J. A, 1969. The Sociology of Language. In P. P. Giglioli, ed. *Language and Social Context*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972.

Journals

When listing journals, you should include these details:

- author(s) surname(s) and initials
- year of publication
- title of article
- name of journal in italics
- volume number in bold
- issue number in brackets
- page numbers, first and last pages.

For example:

Storie, D., 2007. 'Exploring litblog: how literary blogging can be used to guide readers in the selection of new books'. *English in Education* **41** (1) pp. 37–50.

Student Guide

What do I need to know, or be able to do, before taking this course?

You will need to have gained at least a C grade in GCSE English and enjoy reading.

What will I learn?

You will learn how to analyse and respond to plays, poems and novels. Your writing skills will develop and you will have the chance to develop your skills as an independent learner.

Is this the right subject for me?

This course is suitable for students who enjoy:

- reading literary texts
- talking about texts
- responding to texts in writing
- developing writing skills.

How will I be assessed?

There are two units at AS and two units at A2.

AS

For Unit 1, there will be a 2 hour 15 minutes examination with three sections. You will be required to answer short questions on either unseen poetry or unseen prose, and then to write longer answers on poetry and prose texts that you have studied.

Unit 2 is a coursework unit. You will write a maximum of 2000-2500 words on drama texts. Two responses are required: an explorative study and a creative critical response.

A2

For Unit 3, there will be a 2 hour 45 minutes examination with two sections. You will be required to answer questions on an unprepared prose passage or an unprepared poem, and then to write about your response to prose and poetry texts that you have studied.

Unit 4 is a coursework unit. You will write a maximum of 2500-3000 words on a range of texts that you have chosen to study.



What can I do after I've completed the course?

You can apply to do a degree in a wide range of subjects, such as English, journalism, media and communication studies or law. You can also apply for a job with training in the public and voluntary sectors.

By studying literature you will become expert at reading and responding to a wide variety of texts; at interpreting, analysing and gathering and assessing evidence; and at working independently and creatively. In the real world, including the world of work, we are bombarded with texts; the skills that you will learn, therefore, including those of powerful and effective communication, are highly valued by employers.

Next steps!

Ask your teacher to tell you more about the course.

Visit the Edexcel website to take a more detailed look at what you will study and do:

www.edexcel.org.uk

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We will inform centres of any changes to this issue. The latest issue can be found on the Edexcel website: www.edexcel.org.uk.

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