

# A Level English Literature

A Level English Literature: FAQs and  
Support Session

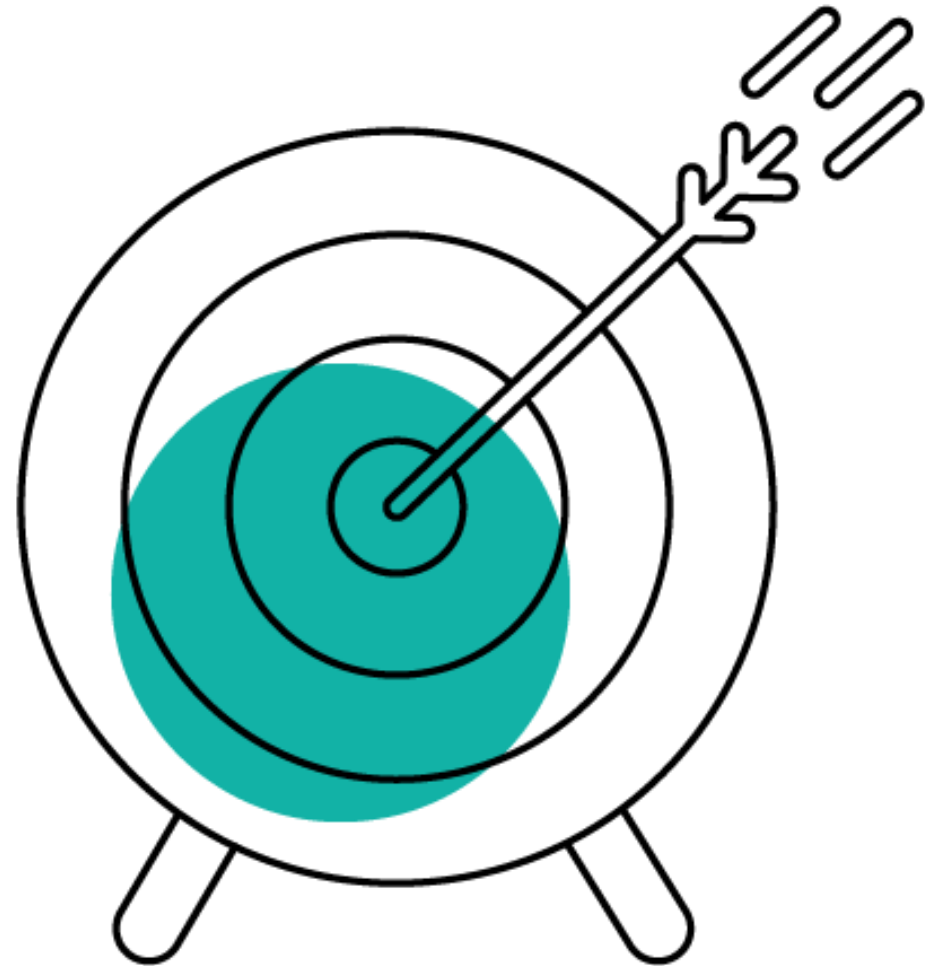


# Aims

This session is designed to support teachers who are new to the A level Literature course.

## **During the session you will:**

- be able to ask questions about the A Level English Literature specification
- network with other teachers and share ideas
- learn about the support and other materials available for the A level Literature specification.



# New to Pearson Edexcel materials

- Before this event you should have completed our new online self-paced 'A Level English Literature: New to Pearson Edexcel' interactive training course.
- The materials on these slides refer to this training course
- If you have not seen this course, or would like a refresher, the link for the course is [here](#).

# Questions from you

- Some of you may have submitted questions in advance through the survey included in the description for this event.
- These will be addressed as we work through the materials today
- If you would like to ask another question, or have anything you want to discuss, please use the chat function at anytime!

# Qualification Structure and Text Coverage



# A Level Structure

Component	Assessment Method	Weighting
1: Drama	Examination	30%
2: Prose	Examination	20%
3: Poetry	Examination	30%
4: Coursework	Coursework	20%

# Set Texts for A level

Component	Text 1	Text 2	Assessment	Weighting
1: Drama	Shakespeare	Other drama*	Written exam	30%
2: Prose	Pre-1900 prose	Prose*	Written exam	20%
3: Poetry	Post-2000 poetry collection	Poetry movement / poet*	Written exam	30%
4: NEA	Free choice	Free choice	One extended comparative essay	20%

\*Yellow highlight in the table indicates where you could choose to cover the third pre-1900 text.

More detail can be found on each of these components later in the course.

# Assessment Objectives

	Assessment Objective	%
<b>AO1</b>	Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression	20–30
<b>AO2</b>	Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts	20–30
<b>AO3</b>	Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received	20–30
<b>AO4</b>	Explore connections across literary texts	10–15
<b>AO5</b>	Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations	10–15



# Questions

Are there any questions about the:

- structure of the course
- text coverage
- text choices
- assessment objectives?

**Please put any questions you have in the chat.**

# Paper 1 Drama



# Paper 1 – Drama

	Overview of assessment	
1	<p><b>DRAMA</b> Paper length: 2 hours and 15 minutes</p> <p>Section A: <b>Shakespeare</b> One essay question from a choice of two on the studied Shakespeare text. (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO5 assessed)</p> <p>Section B: <b>Other drama</b> One essay question from a choice of two on the studied drama text. (AO1, AO2, AO3 assessed)</p>	<p>30%</p> <p>60 marks</p> <p>Section A: 35 marks</p> <p>Section B: 25 marks</p>

# Section A: Shakespeare – Example Question

EITHER

1

2

- 7 Explore the presentation of relationships between men and women in Shakespeare's *Othello*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

4

3

(Total for Question 7 = 35 marks)

OR

- 8 Explore the presentation of outsiders in Shakespeare's *Othello*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

(Total for Question 8 = 35 marks)

# Shakespeare – Extract from an exemplar

Therefore, it could certainly be argued that Othello is willing to believe Iago because of his misogynistic values and this could be seen through the symbol of the handkerchief. Whilst critics such as Rymer dismissed the handkerchief's symbolic nature, ridiculing how much suffering originates from a flimsy and insignificant piece of cloth, a feminist critic may suggest that this is reflective of the reality of life for women in a phallogentric society, as their fate could rest entirely on an insignificant object if a man decides.

Alternatively, some critics – such as Boose and Snow – have viewed the handkerchief as symbolically significant as it 'subconsciously evokes for Othello the blood-stained sheets of his wedding night, and his wife's loss of virginity there'. Therefore, it could be argued that the handkerchief – to Othello – is a symbol of his wife's chastity, so when he believes she has given it away, he believes that she is no longer chaste or faithful. This certainly reflects Loomba's argument that Othello's misogynistic belief in the inherent duplicity of women is his downfall as he accepts such insignificant evidence as a handkerchief due to its symbolic nature and his fear of cuckoldry. Therefore, Shakespeare could be drawing the audience's attention to the dangers of deeply patriarchal societies and an obsession with honour, as this seems to drive the tragedy.

## Section B: Other Drama – Example Question

EITHER

1

2

- 27 Explore Williams' use of stagecraft in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.

3

(Total for Question 27 = 25 marks)

OR

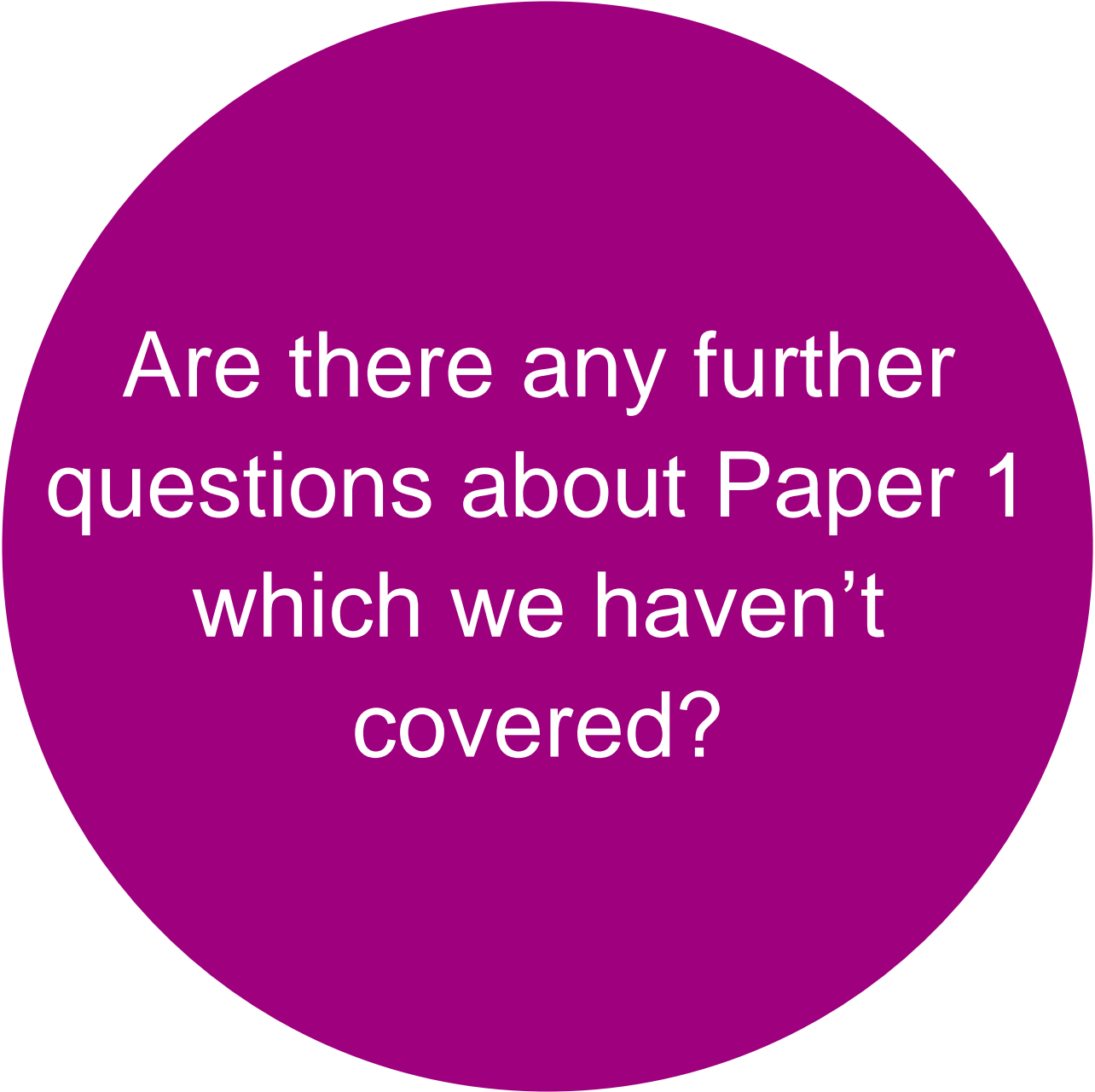
- 28 Explore how Williams presents the relationship between Blanche and Mitch in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.

(Total for Question 28 = 25 marks)



## Other Drama – Extract from an exemplar

Williams' use of stagecraft also ~~works to~~ can be interpreted as a means of him projecting his own sensibilities, particularly through his use of lighting. Light is ~~an~~ ~~a~~ a key motif in 'Streetcar', both in virtue of the light imagery used but also the symbol of the paper lantern and the physical lighting on stage. Regardless of the medium in which this motif is sustained, ~~the~~ light becomes synonymous with truth in 'Streetcar'. ~~Blanche's~~ ~~therep~~ Blanche's aversion to the light can be read as her not wanting to confront the truths that she is posed with, whether it be her aging, her ~~comp~~ promiscuous past or her complicity in the suicide of her husband. This is exemplified



Are there any further  
questions about Paper 1  
which we haven't  
covered?



# Paper 2 Prose



# Paper 2

	Overview of assessment	
2	<p><b>Prose</b></p> <p>Paper length: 1 hour 15 mins</p> <p>One comparative essay question from a choice of two on the studied prose texts text. (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4 assessed)</p>	<p>20%</p> <p>40 marks</p>

# Paper 2: Prose – Example Question

## Texts

Pre-1900: *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley; *The War of the Worlds*, H G Wells

Post-1900: *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro; *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood

## EITHER

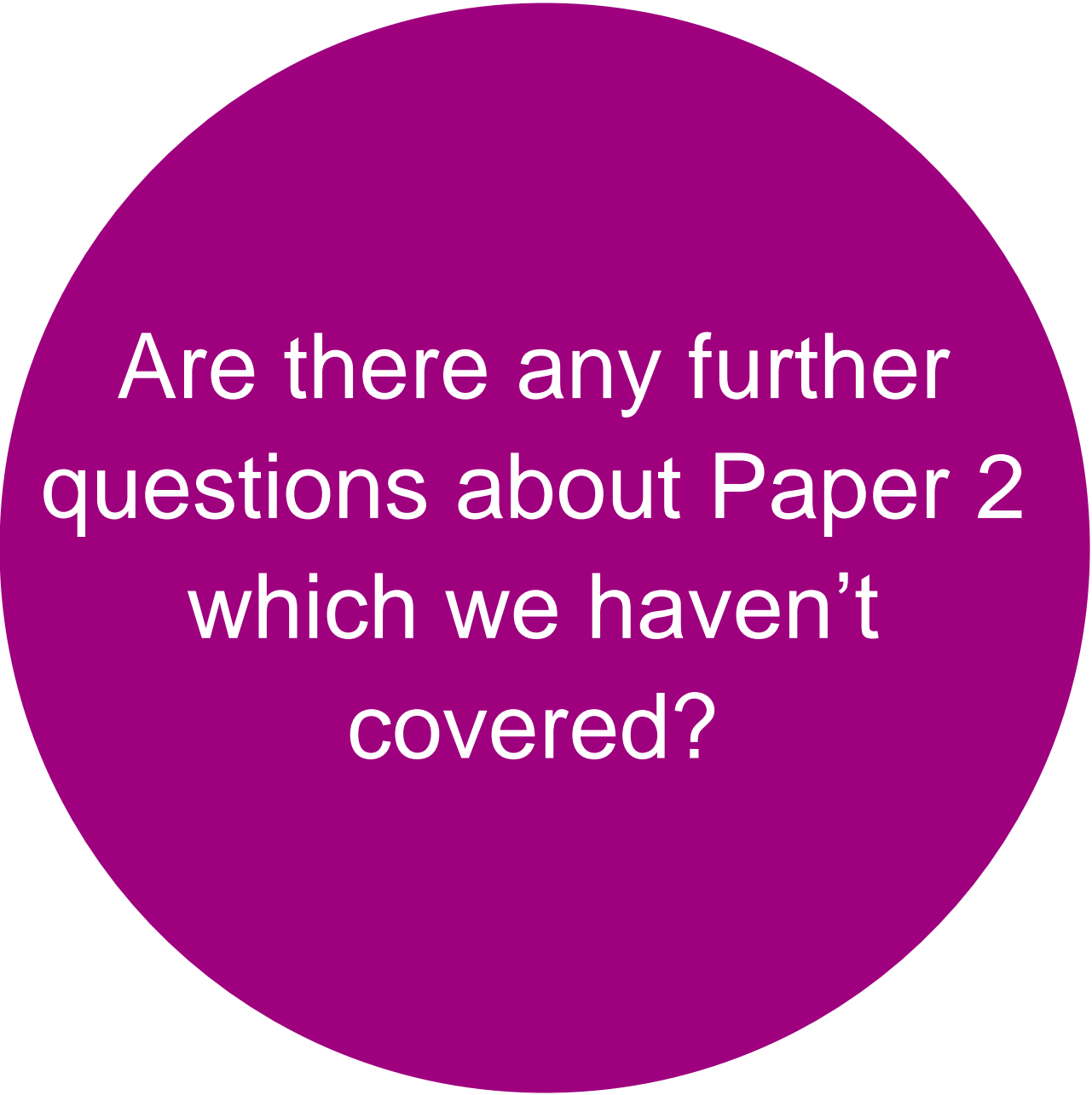
- 1 2 3
- 7 Compare the ways in which the writers of your **two** chosen texts present isolation. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.
- 4 (Total for Question 7 = 40 marks)

## OR

- 8 Compare the ways in which the writers of your **two** chosen texts explore threats to society. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.
- (Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)
-

# Prose – Extract from an exemplar

the gothic fiction 'Frankenstein' by Mary Shelley, and the post-modern 'The Handmaid's Tale' by Margaret Atwood, threats, that endure time, are presented to readers in a didactic way. Both authors ultimately center said didacticism upon threats relating to religion and threats relating to male power. However, Shelley's threats relating to religion focus far more on elements that she, a devout Christian, believed tarnished the role of God. Additionally, the male power within the science fiction 'Frankenstein' is centered more around a threat of male hubris. Atwood, contrastingly draws on post-modern notions of antiauthoritarian views to critique male power and religion as a tool and a threat used in the commodification of women. Arguably both authors' differing approaches to the threat of weaponized religion and male power may be due to the vastly different worlds they experienced, due to the almost 200 years between each novel publishing.



Are there any further  
questions about Paper 2  
which we haven't  
covered?

# Paper 3

## Section A: Contemporary Poetry



# Paper 3

	Overview of assessment	
3	<p><b>POETRY</b> Paper length: 2 hours and 15 minutes</p> <p>Section A: <b>Contemporary Poetry</b> One essay question from a choice of two comparing an unseen modern poem and one named poem from the studied collection. (AO1, AO2, AO4 assessed)</p> <p>Section B: <b>Poetry Collections</b> One essay question from a choice of two on the studied poetry period or author. (AO1, AO2, AO3 assessed)</p>	<p>30% 60 marks</p> <p>Section A 30 marks</p> <p>Section B 30 marks</p>



# Paper 3: Section A – Example Question

## SECTION A

### Post-2000 Specified Poetry

Answer ONE question. Begin your answer on page 3.

EITHER

- 1 Read the poem *Stillwater Cove* by Ada Limón on page 2 of the source booklet and reread the anthology poem *Out of the Bag* by Seamus Heaney (on pages 3–5).

Compare the methods both poets use to explore childhood memories.

(Total for Question 1 = 30 marks)

OR

- 2 Read the poem *Stillwater Cove* by Ada Limón on page 2 of the source booklet and reread the anthology poem *From the Journal of a Disappointed Man* by Andrew Motion (on page 6).

Compare the methods both poets use to explore the act of observing.

(Total for Question 2 = 30 marks)



# Contemporary Poetry – Extract from an exemplar

While the speaker in 'Stillwater Cover' explores an idyllic and beautiful childhood memory, made evident by Limon's use of gentle and playful images of nature, the speaker in 'Out of the Bag' recounts a traumatic memory in his childhood, evident through the juxtaposing gory bodily imagery throughout his flashback. Indeed, both poets use fantastical or supernatural imagery to display the wonders of childhood, such as the "furtive magic" of the "sun ricocheting off cresting waves" in stanza one of Stillwater Cover. Similar to the allusion of an old wives tale that children came out of Doctor's bag in the line "all of us came in Doctor Kerlin's bag" This sense of magic and storytelling...

# Paper 3

## Section B: Poetry Collections



# Paper 3: Section B – Example Question

## The Romantics

Prescribed text

*English Romantic Verse*, editor David Wright

**EITHER**

- 11 Explore the ways in which attitudes to ageing are presented in *So We'll Go no more A Roving* by Lord Byron and **one** other poem. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.

(Total for Question 11 = 30 marks)

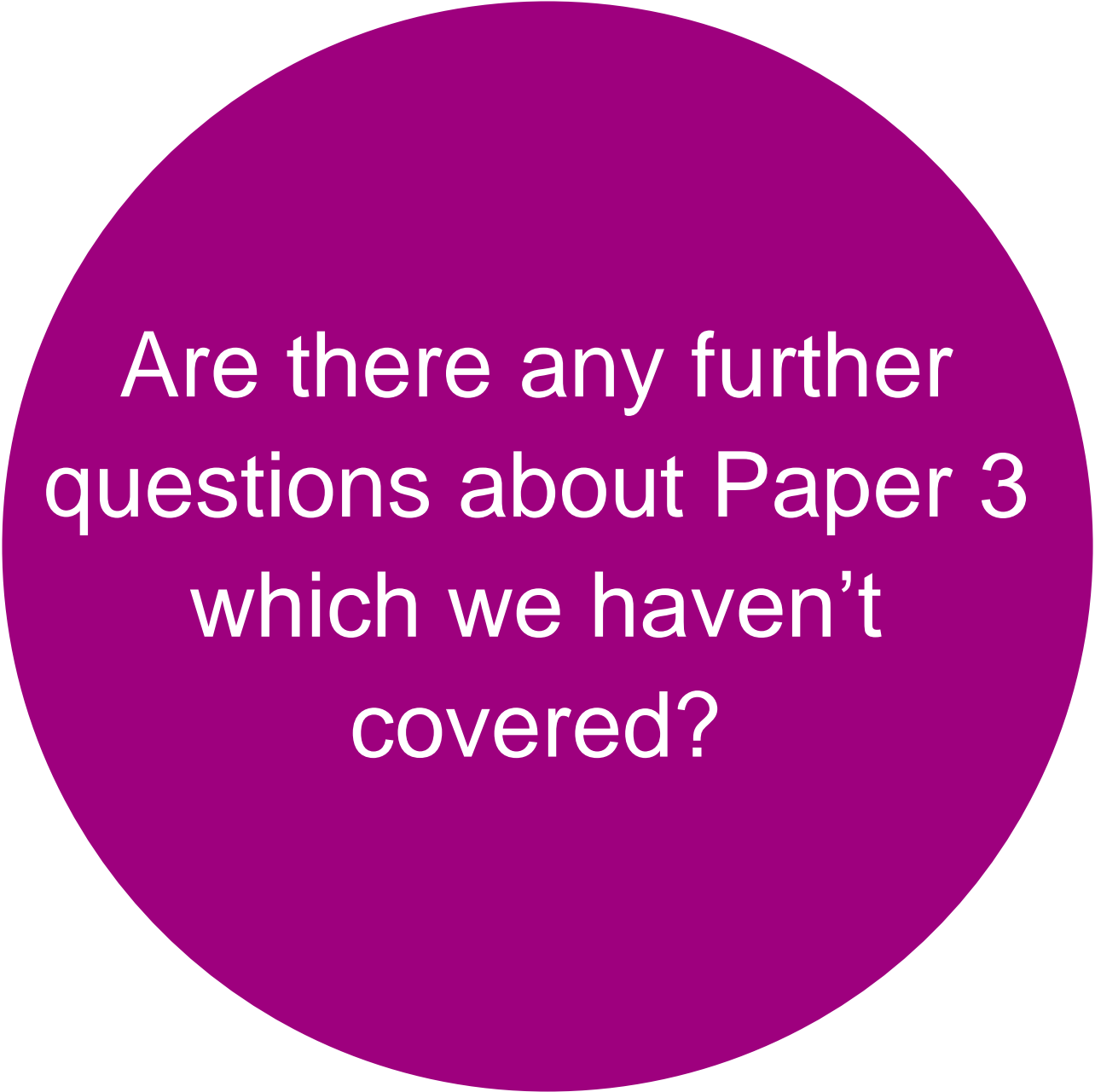
**OR**

- 12 Explore the ways in which melancholy is presented in *Ode on Melancholy* by John Keats and **one** other poem. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.

(Total for Question 12 = 30 marks)

# Poetry Collections – Extract from an exemplar

In Ode on Melancholy by John Keats, melancholy is presented as a cause of suffering and potentially death. Keats begins his poem with the imperative command: 'No, no, go not', listing multiple things he believes melancholy might inspire a person to do. The repetition and irregular meter in the opening two lines, straying away from the iambic pentameter largely used in the poem, creates a tone of desperation, acknowledging the ability of melancholy to inspire thoughts of death. Keats himself at points was suicidal, stating that 'death or sickness' always 'spoilt my hours'. At the age of 8 he lost his father, at 14 his mother to tuberculosis, and later his brother to tuberculosis. In 1815 he completed medical training at St Guy's hospital in London, something that meant he recognized the symptoms of tuberculosis in himself. In 1820 he wrote: 'It is arterial blood... my death warrant.' This context deeply informed Keats' exploration of melancholy as something that concerns suffering and even thoughts of death.



Are there any further  
questions about Paper 3  
which we haven't  
covered?

# Paper 4 Non-examination assessment (NEA)



# Paper 4

	Overview of assessment	
4	<b>COURSEWORK</b>  One extended comparative essay referring to two texts (2500–3000 words) (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4, AO5)	20%  60 marks

# Key elements for NEA

- Students must select two texts from any period or genre other than texts that have already been studied.
- Students have to link the texts and engage with contexts and alternative interpretations.
- All five Assessment Objectives are addressed in the coursework, so choosing appropriate texts is very important.
- Students need to demonstrate sophisticated readings and their own critical arguments.



# Support

We have lots of guidance on approaching the NEA which you can access [here](#) as well as additional support covered in the tabs below.

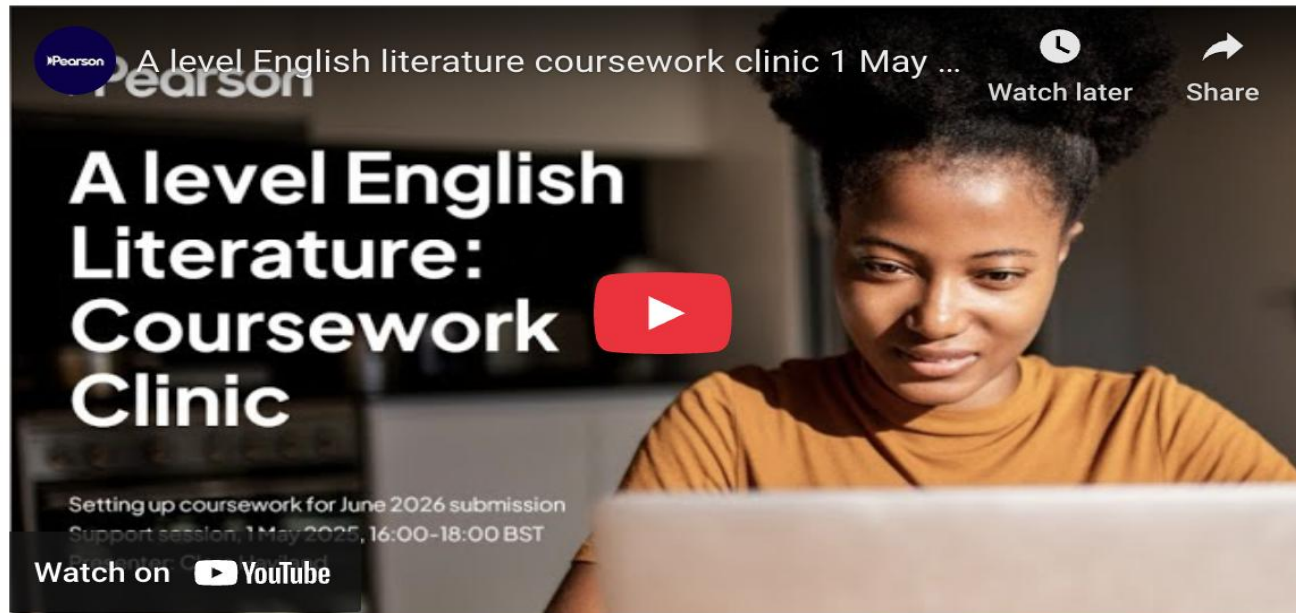
NEA CLINICS

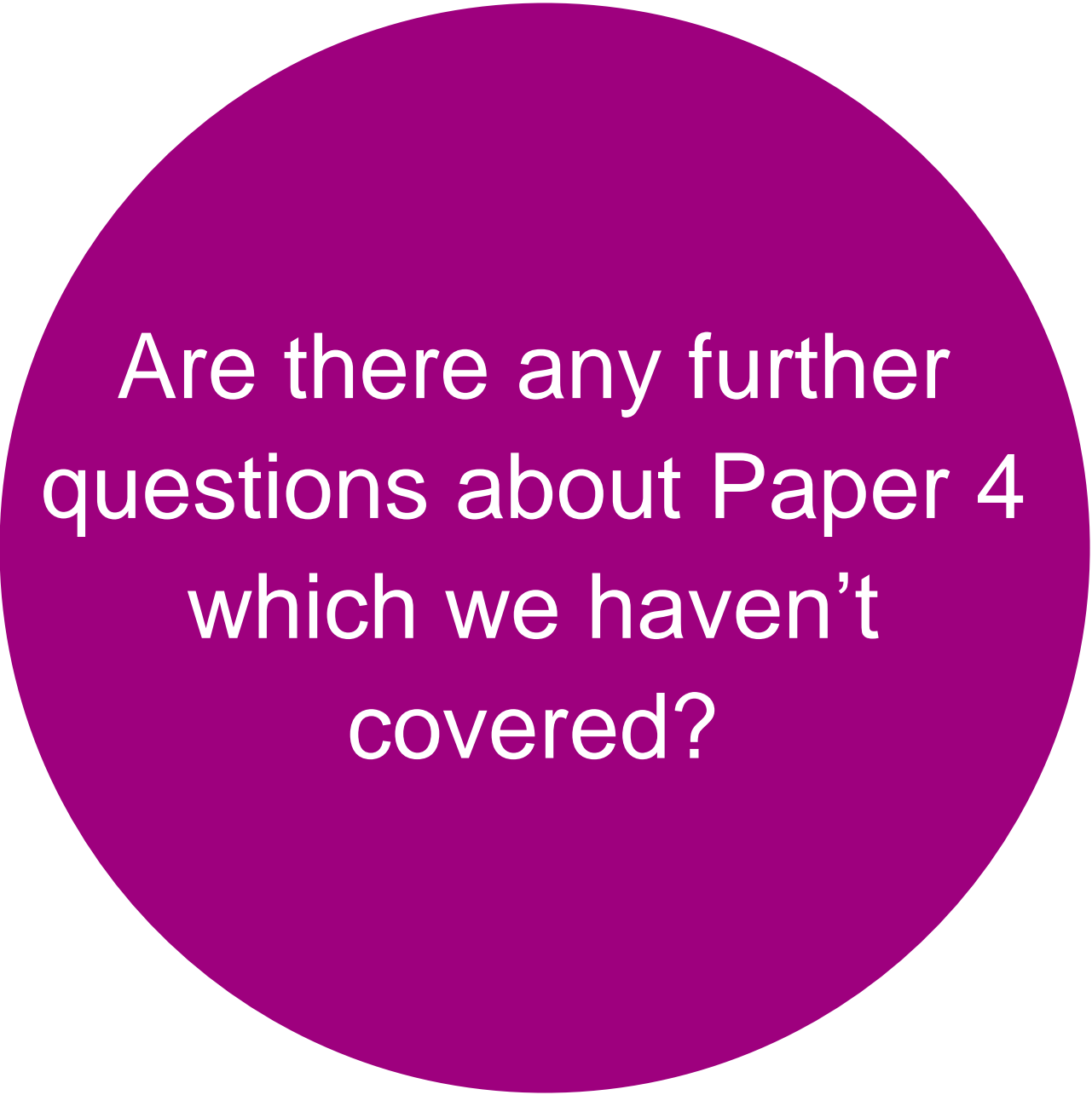
SELECTING TEXTS

NEA ADVISORY SERVICE

Our subject advisor runs regular coursework clinics to answer your questions. These events will be advertised on the [Pearson Professional Development Academy](#). A recording from this year's event can be found below.

[Link to support](#)





Are there any further  
questions about Paper 4  
which we haven't  
covered?

# Support and website



# Website

Our A level Literature course has comprehensive support material for teachers which can be found on our website.

The link to the teaching and learning resources is [here](#).

I am going to share my screen to give you the highlights!

We have also just launched this new [support guide](#).

EXPAND ALL	
Anthology	▼
Assessment guidance	▼
Course planner	▼
Coursework support	▼
Exemplar material	NEW ▼
Guidance	▼
Guide	▼
Lesson plan	▼
Past training content	NEW ▼
Reading list	▼
Scheme of work	▼
Specimen paper and mark scheme	▼
Teacher support	▼

# Subject Advisor Support

Our subject advisors are experts in their fields and are here to support you throughout the year.

## English

**Email:** [teachingenglish@pearson.com](mailto:teachingenglish@pearson.com)

**Phone:** +44 (0) 344 463 2535  
(Mon–Fri, 9.00–17.00)

[Book an appointment with your Subject Advisor](#)

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**Clare Haviland**  
English



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## Facebook Teacher Groups

Be sure to also join our Pearson Edexcel A level English teacher group on Facebook. Created to give A level English teachers a private, professional space to have discussions. The group is managed by your Subject Advisor, Clare Haviland.

Click [here](#) to join the group, or scan this code

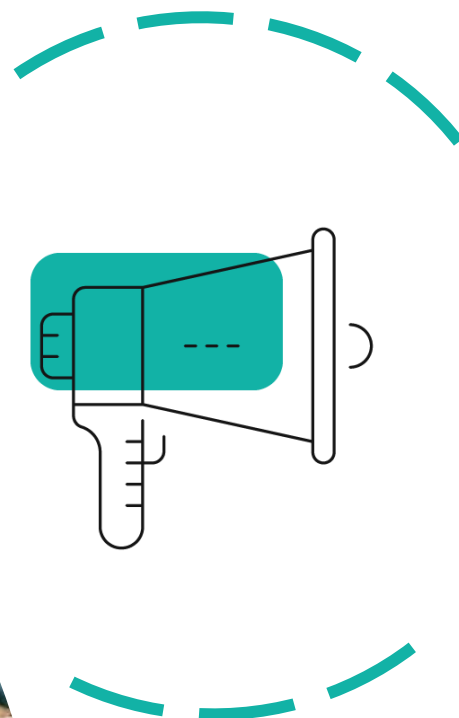




# Find out more

For more professional development courses please see Pearson's [Professional Development Academy](#)





# Your Feedback Matters

Following this event, you will receive an invitation to share your thoughts about the session. Your feedback is invaluable to us, as it helps us tailor our professional development materials to better meet your needs. Please don't hesitate to let us know what you'd like to see more of and what areas you think could be improved.





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