

# **FE English The Big Buy-In:**

## Strategies for setting the tone for a successful start

**Trainer:** Hollie Barnes-Lomax





Welcome

# Session Overview

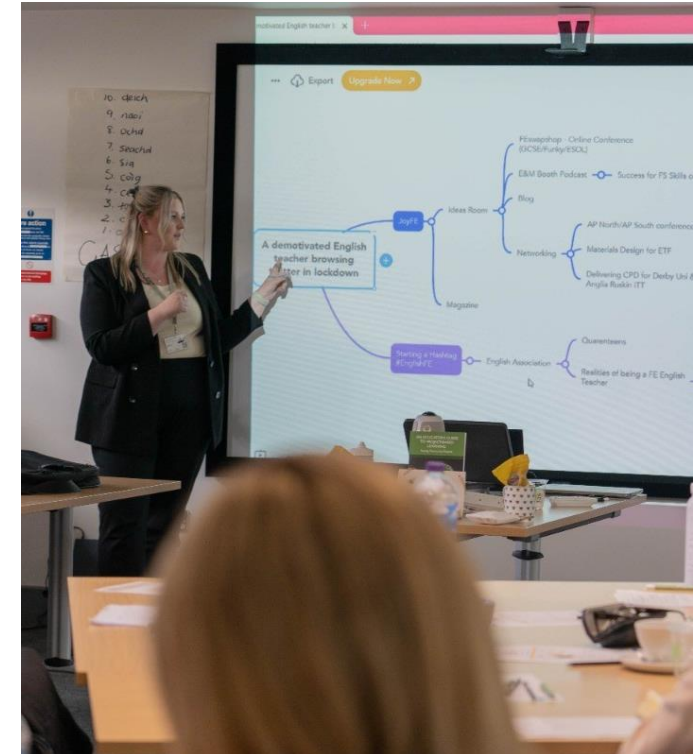
Getting post-16 learners to engage with GCSE English resits can be challenging, but with the right approach, the first half term can set the tone for success.

This session is designed for teachers delivering GCSE English resits; offering insights into learner mindset, utilising starting points, and practical strategies to achieve *the big buy-in* to ensure a strong start. You'll also gain top tips for planning to set both you and your students up for success.

# About me

## Hollie Barnes-Lomax

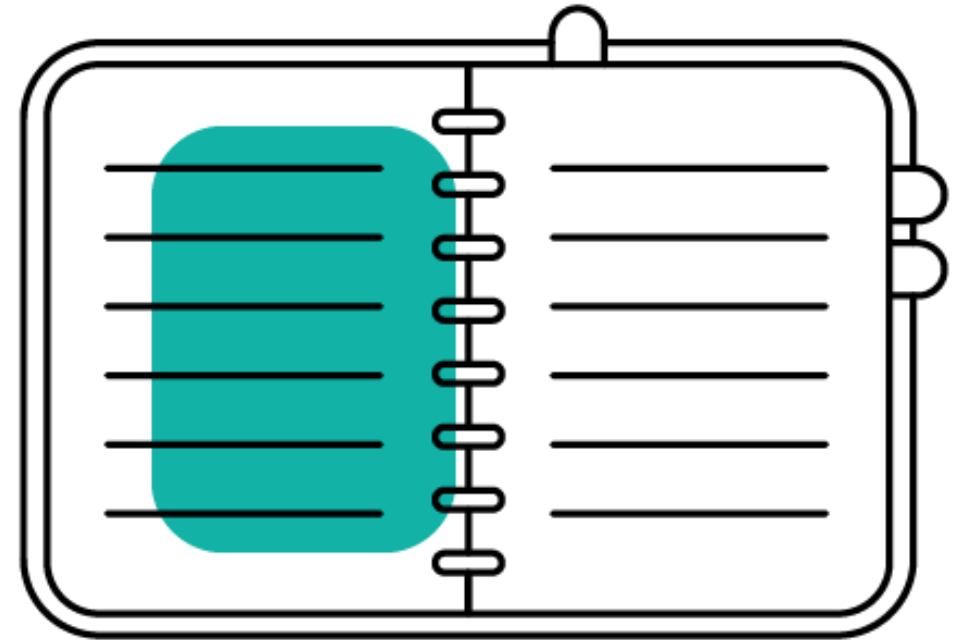
- Passionate about creating collaborative spaces where teachers can learn and thrive
- English lecturer with 9 years of teaching experience
- Specialising in GCSE/FS English and Teacher Training
- Experienced in materials writing



# Aims for today

In this session we are going to look at:

- **developing** an understanding of the learner mindset within GCSE English resit cohorts
- **examining** purposeful initial assessment processes and how they inform purposeful planning for GCSE resit learners
- **exploring** practical engaging classroom activities that support induction and learner development in the first six weeks of GCSE resit delivery.



# Let's get started... Q&A

How would you describe a typical learner in an FE English resit classroom at the start of the academic year (September?)

Pop an answer in the chat function.





A word cloud of psychological terms is centered within a light gray oval. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some overlapping. The colors of the words range from dark blue to teal. The words include: capable, unmotivated, underconfident, disengaged, habitual, demotivated, resistant, anxious, mistrustful, and diverse. The word 'resistant' is oriented diagonally across the center of the cloud.

capable  
unmotivated  
underconfident  
disengaged  
habitual  
demotivated  
resistant  
anxious  
mistrustful  
diverse

# Demotivators – Wallace (2017)

**Loss of Hope**

**Fear**

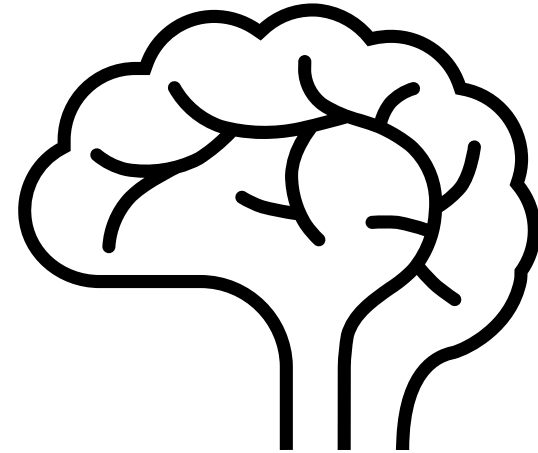
**Previous negative  
experience**

**Boredom**



# Inside the learner's mind

- Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1957)
- Adolescent Brain (Blakemore, 2018)
- 'Fixed' mindset (Dweck, 2006)





# Starting Points

# Where are **we** starting from?

## GCSE in school

Up to 5 hours  
Lang & Lit

KS3
Year 10
Year 11

## GCSE Resit Curriculum

Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
2–3 hours p/wk								

A tailored and prioritised curriculum is crucial

# Over to you....Q&A



What does the first 6 weeks look like for learners in your organisation?

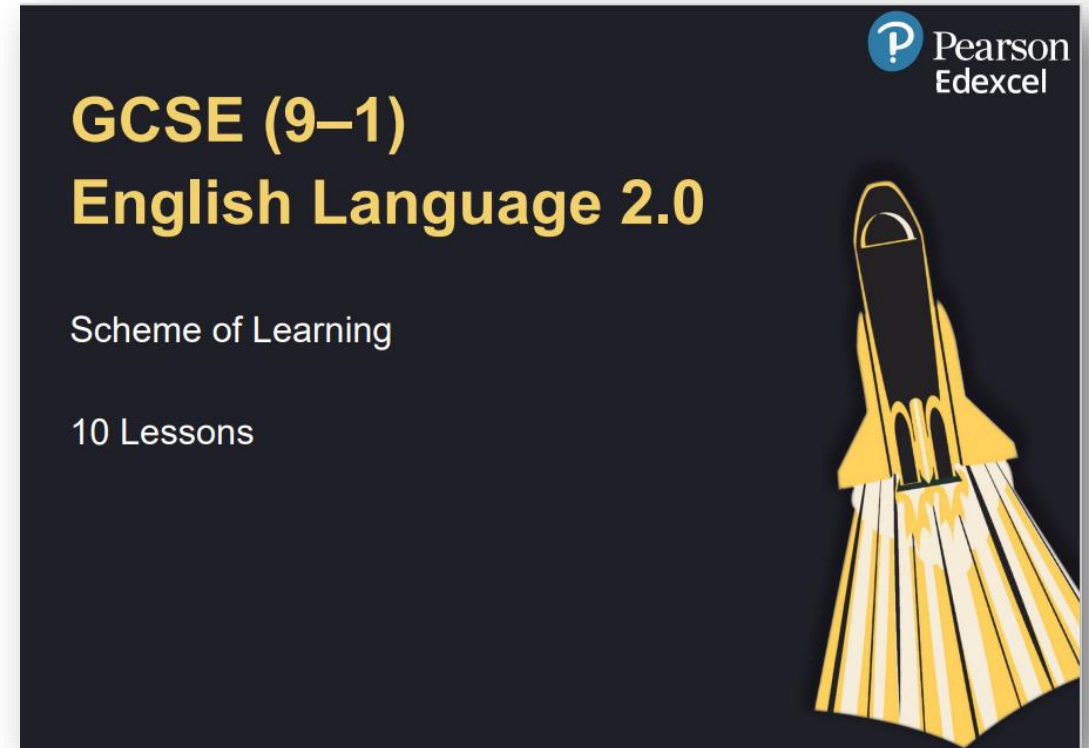
Pop an answer in the chat function

# Underpinning Principles

- **Trauma-informed:** Avoid spotlighting, allow opt-outs, validate experiences
- **Scaffolded success:** Ensure all tasks have a “way in” and a “way forward”
- **Consistent expectations and routines:** Build psychological safety
- **Celebrate progress (not perfection):** Build momentum through visible wins

# Scheme of Work/Learning

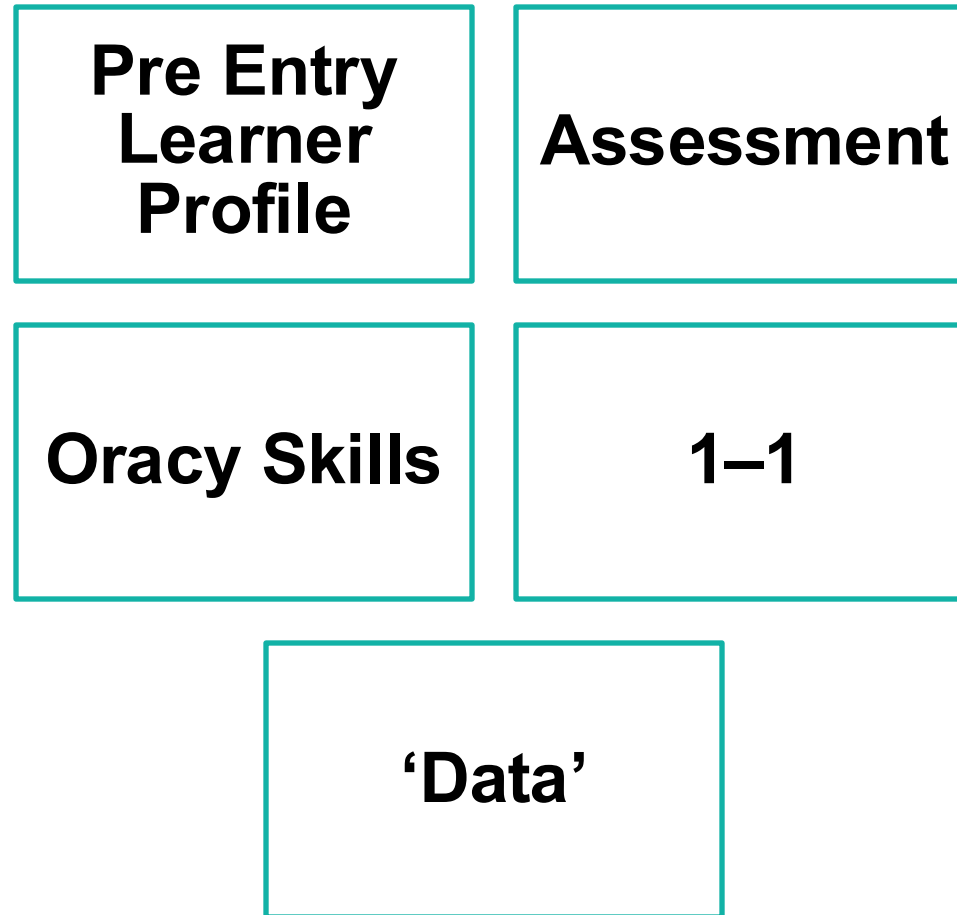
- What are you planning for the first 6 weeks?
- What are the priorities?
- Nov sitting vs June sitting: how will this impact your planning?
- Non-Fiction vs Fiction? – What are you starting with?



# First 6 weeks

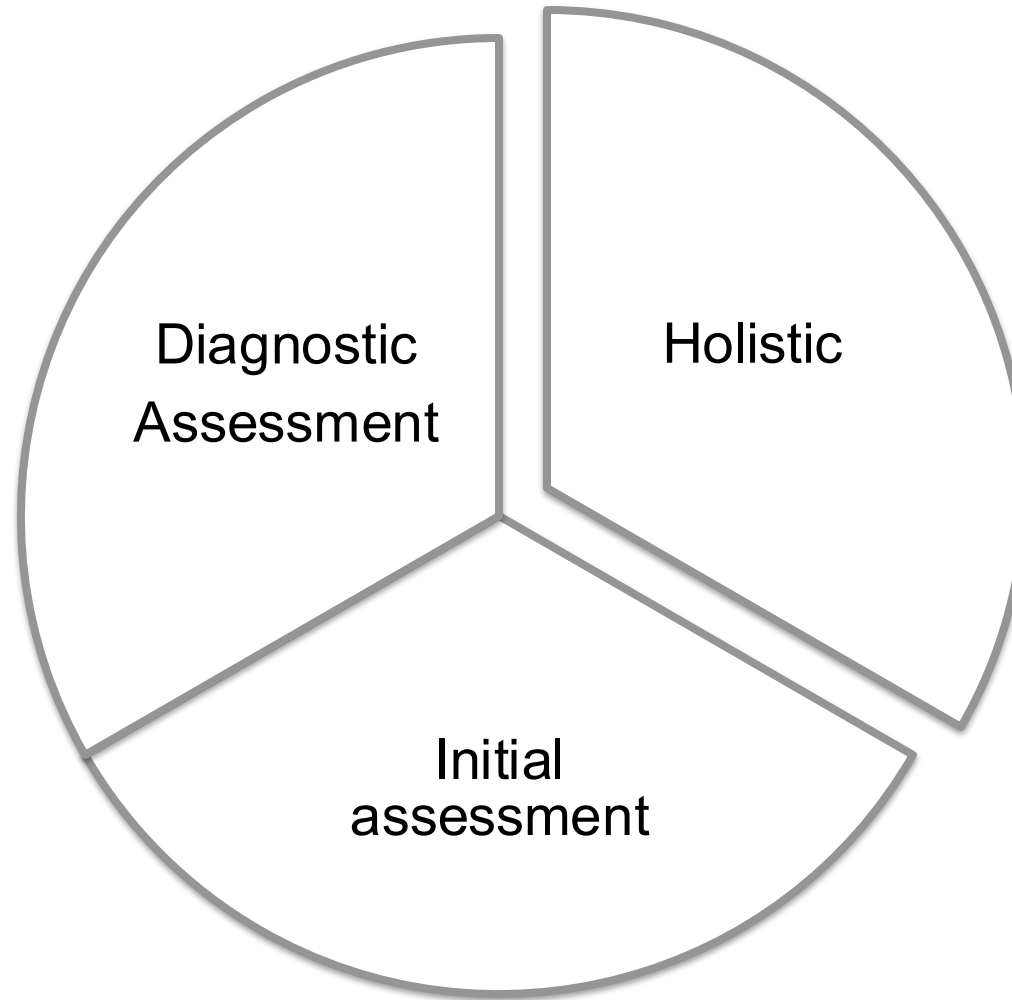
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Welcome, Identity & Why English?	Confidence in Comprehension	Spotting and Using Language Techniques	Introduction to Writing to Describe/Narrate	Confidence with Writing Structures	Building Independence and Baseline Understanding

# Initial Assessment as a multi-stage process

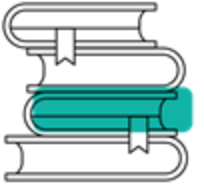




# Initial Assessment as a multi-stage process



# Starting points



- **Diagnostic, not punitive:** Focused on identifying skills gaps and strengths; not retesting failure.
- **Holistic and inclusive:** Recognises prior learning, emotional barriers, and learner context.
- **Actionable:** Generates clear, useful data that shapes schemes of work, groupings, interventions, and individual support plans.
- **Learner-centred:** Begins to rebuild learner confidence and ownership of learning.

# Assessing – Contextualisation

## Business Studies:

Q. **Describe a day in the life** of a business professional, share your opinions on a business trend or idea.

OR

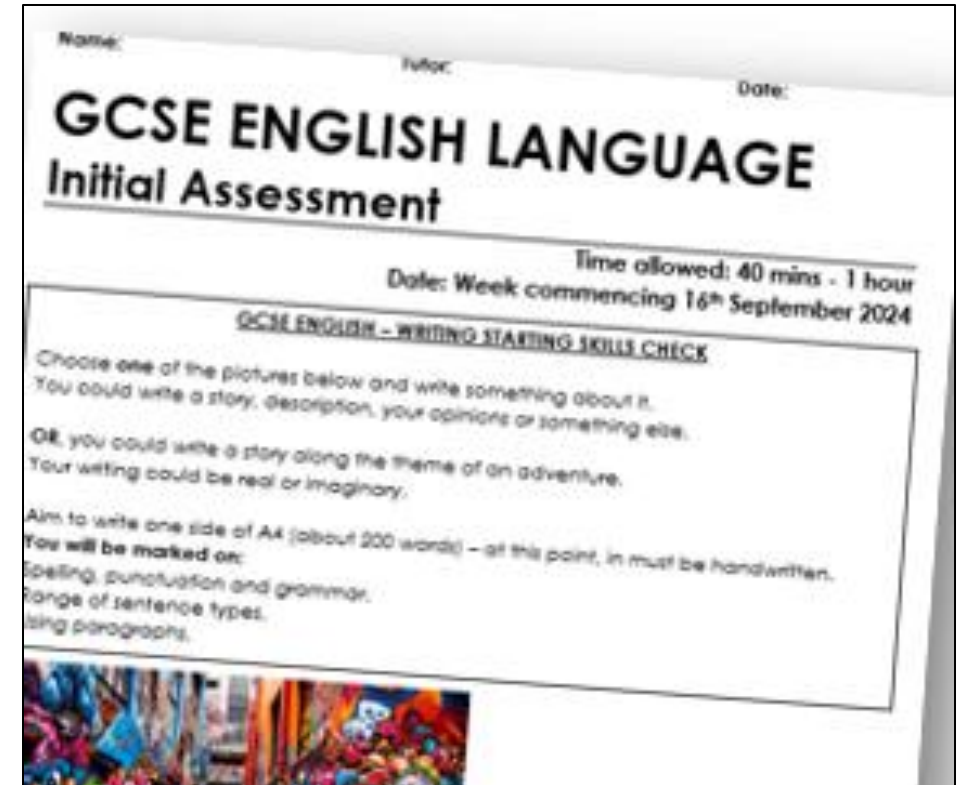
Q. **Write a story** about an unexpected event that impacts your business and how you navigate through it.

## Bricklaying:

Q. Describe a day on a construction site, share your opinions on the importance of bricklaying in building structures.

OR

Q. **Write a story** about an unexpected event that impacts your business and how you navigate through it.



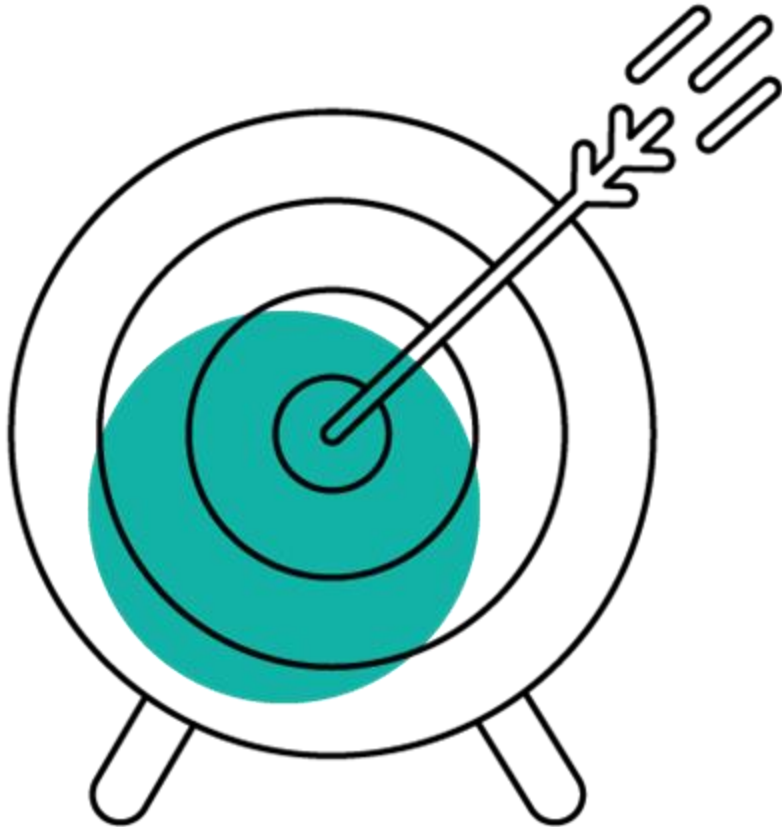
# Upskilling or reteaching?

Reteach the  
whole curriculum

Focus on  
skills



# Skills focused start



- Synthesising
- Analysing
- Comparing
- Evaluating
- Reading & Writing

# Exam Oversight

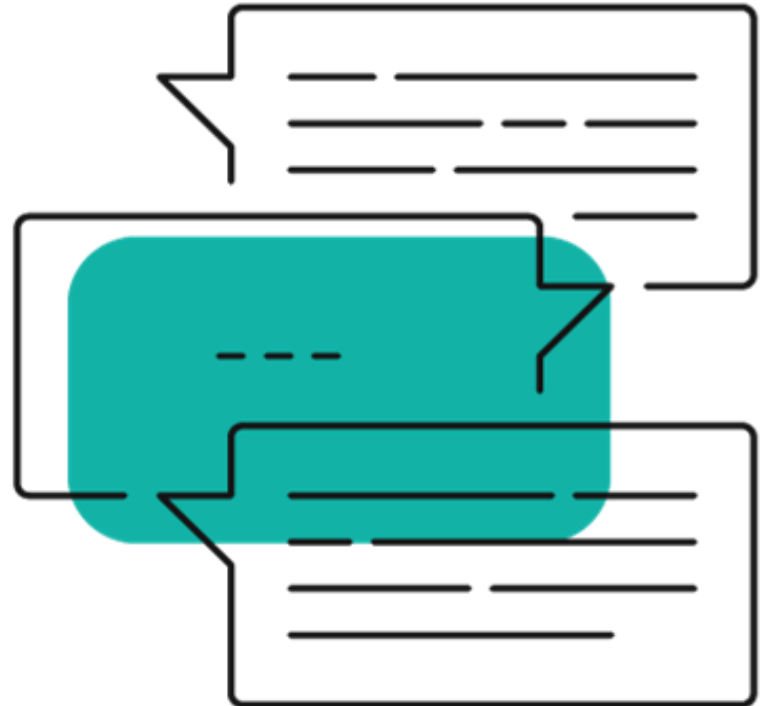
## GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - PAPER 1

@HollieB\_FE



# Over to you....Q&A

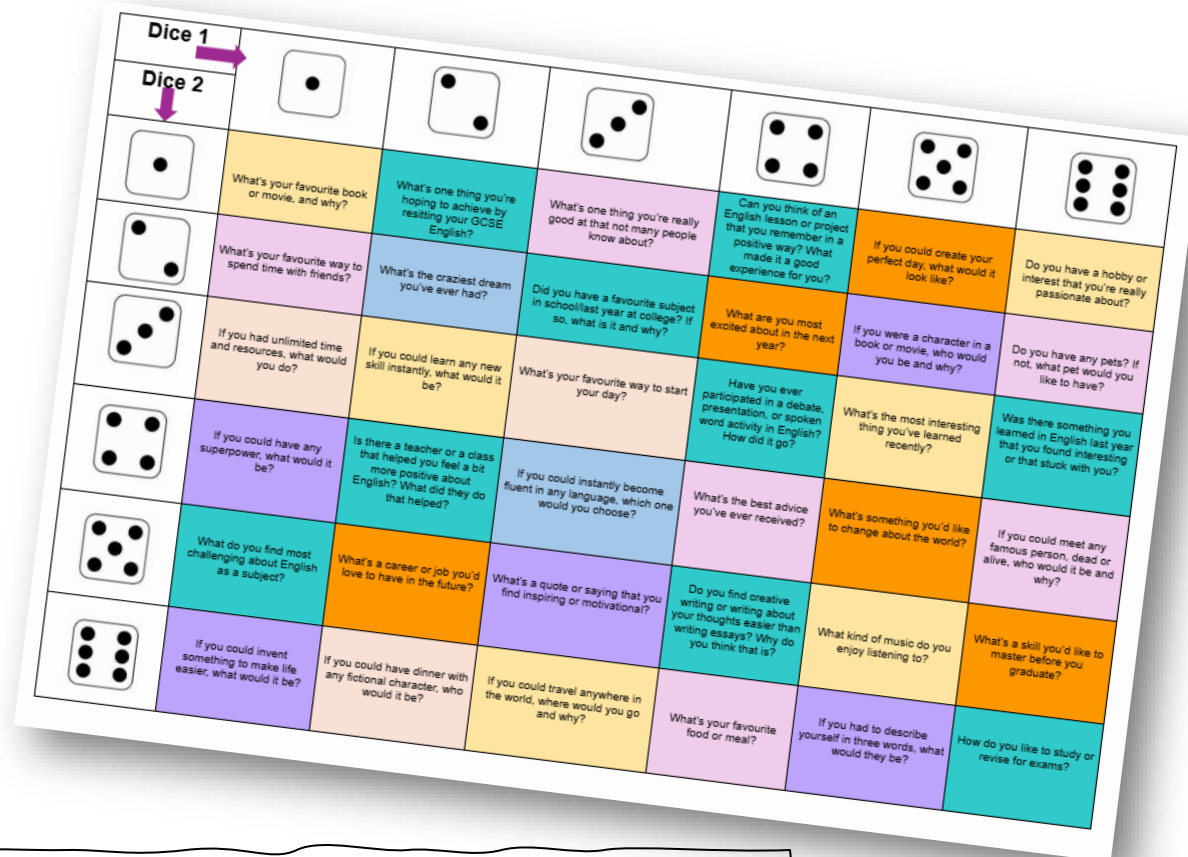
Share your favourite GCSE  
English resit induction activities in  
the chat function



# Induction Activities: Fun but purposeful



- Getting to know 'me'
- Autobiography
- GCSE Pointless (Quiz Show Style)
- Features Bingo
- Quote showdown
- Jenga
- Emoji Quiz
- TikTok or Shakespeare?



**Correct Quote:**

**"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."**





# Consider the text



- Player 21 by Camryn Garrett
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
- Crown by Stormzy (song)
- The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

# Jumping Straight in? – Comparison



**Welcome Back! –  
Let's get started...**

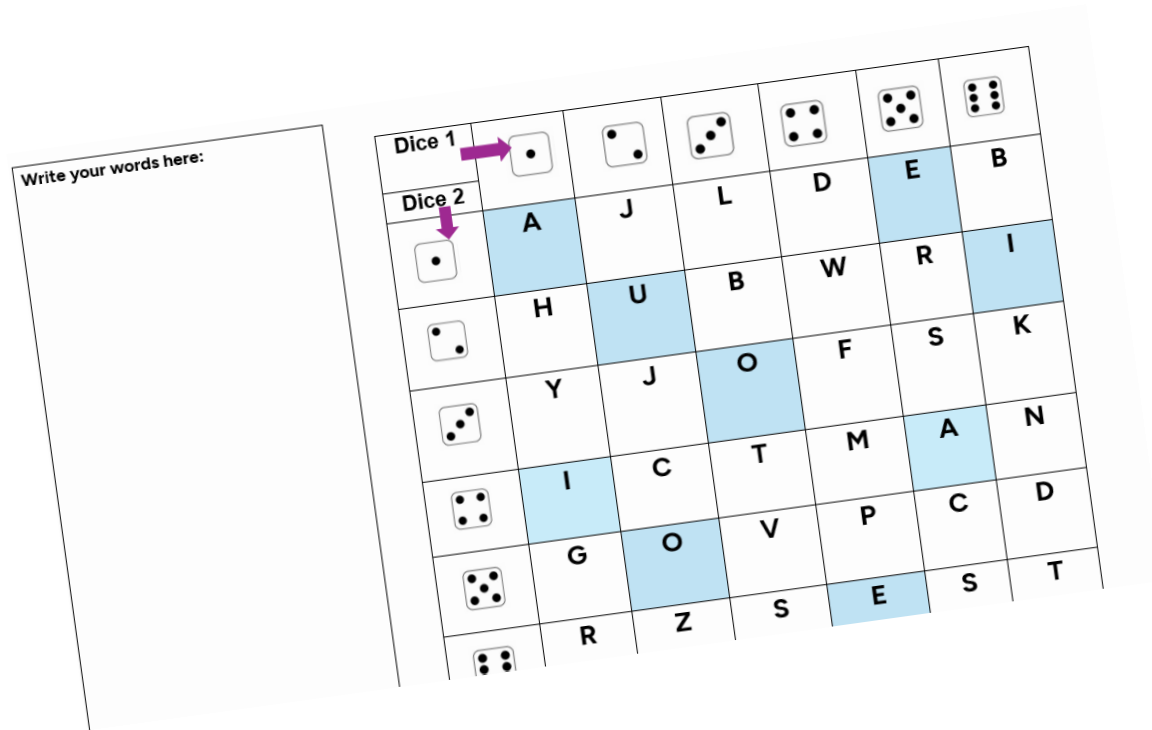
On Monday we were looking into similarities and differences.

Use the table to look into the similarities and differences between the images

	Mona Lisa	The girl with the pearl earring	Similarity/ difference
Colours & Mood			
Subject Matter			
Artistic Style			
Emotions Created			
Hidden Meanings			

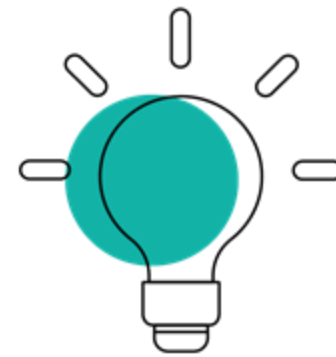
- Realia
- Real life comparisons; trainers, chocolate, supermarket
- Contextualisation: Art-work, tools on the job

# Keep it Kinaesthetic



- *Structure Boxes* – Julie Hughes
- Tarsia
- Guess Who
- Scrabble
- Gamification

# Quick wins



## **Find out what they're great at**

Identifying their strengths. Whether it's speaking, creative ideas, or analysing film clips. Use these as a springboard to tackle trickier skills with more confidence. Go visit them in their other classes

## **Reframe language**

e.g. Achieve – '~~pass/fail~~' ; Skills Checks/Checkpoints – '~~assessment~~'/'~~exams~~'

## **Showcase the best of the discipline of English**

e.g. showcase media, Youtube, videos, music rather than lots of printed texts.

## **Get students working together**

Encourage pair or group activities where students can talk things through and help each other understand. Peer support can boost confidence and reduce the pressure of getting it "right" first time.

## **Celebrate small successes**

Recognise and praise progress, not just end results. Acknowledging small wins helps build momentum and keeps learners motivated.

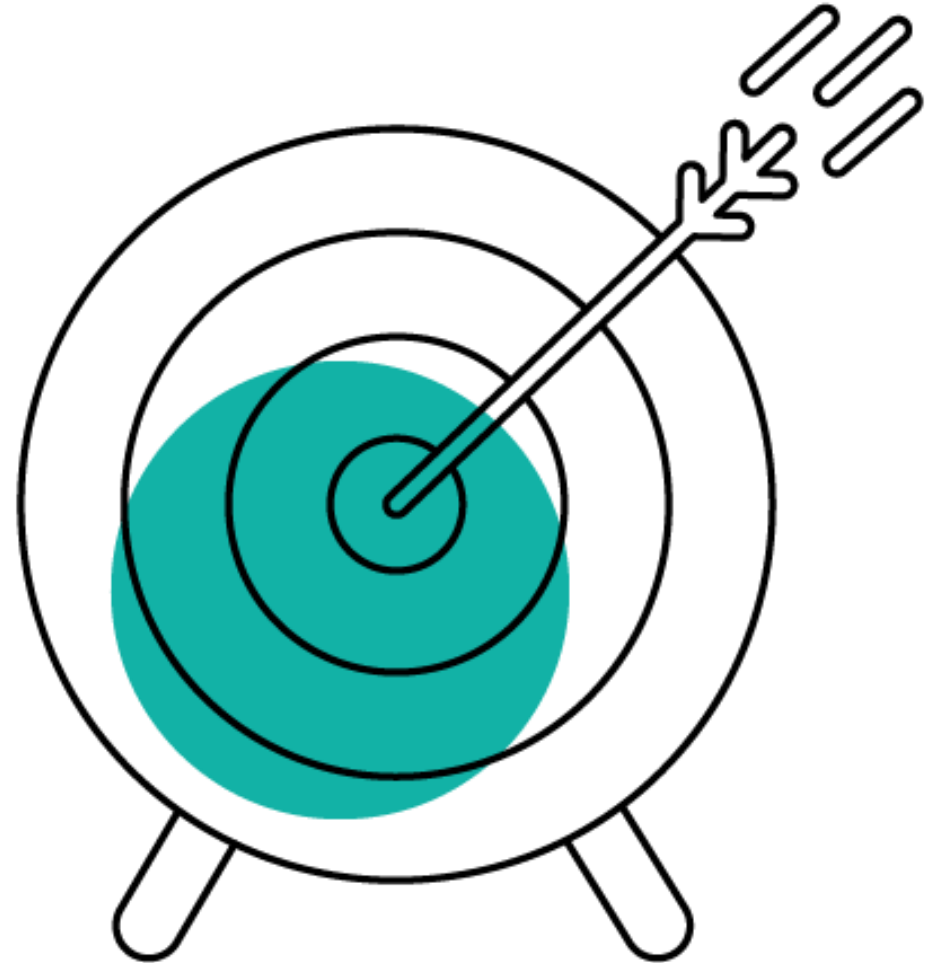
# Final Thoughts...

*“In short, taking an interest in learners and how their identity is shaped is key to developing a trust relationship which transforms “students’ diversities into pedagogical assets”*

Biannca Fanciullacci (2024) – GCSE Resit Hub  
[blog:reluctant readers]

*“FE is all about building relationships”*

Jonny Kay (2021)  
English & Maths Booth [Podcast]



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**Clare Haviland**  
English

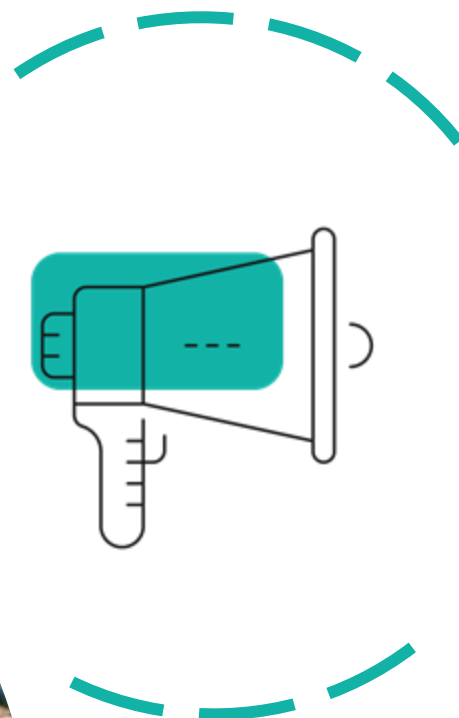




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# Your Feedback Matters

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.



# Post-16 English survey

We'd love your feedback to help shape  
the future of GCSE English in FE





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