

Ready for September 2015 – GCE AS and A level English Literature

This mini guide is designed to help you access the resources you need to start teaching our 2015 AS and A level English Literature specifications and to answer frequently asked questions.

English Literature

Coursework

Q: Are there any prescriptions about which texts we must set for coursework?

No. There is a free choice of literary texts for the coursework components. These may be from any of the genres of prose, poetry, drama, and literary non-fiction, and from any time period. For examples of appropriate coursework texts and tasks, please see the [Getting Started Guide](#).

Q. Do we need to have our coursework texts and/or tasks approved?

No. If you are in any doubt about the suitability of coursework texts and tasks, you are advised to e-mail the coursework checking service. This service, which will be coming online in the next academic year, will provide feedback on proposed coursework tasks/texts, although there is no requirement to consult this service if you are confident in the appropriateness of the students'/teachers' choices. Further information on this service will be provided on the Edexcel website and through the subject advisor as it becomes available.

Q: Can texts in translation be used as coursework texts?

No. Only texts that originated in the English language can be used for coursework. These texts do not have to be British, however.

Q: How much similarity is permitted between students' selections of texts and tasks?

We encourage you to allow your students as much freedom and individuality as possible in the coursework component, so that they might be able to pursue their personal interests. This might mean teaching two texts but allowing students to choose or suggest a range of individual coursework titles or related wider reading or criticism. In such cases you would need to be confident that the texts had sufficient breadth and depth to allow multiple, alternative titles to be developed. Alternatively, this may involve teaching one text and allowing students a choice of a second text (perhaps from a restricted shortlist); or complete free choice by students.

Q. How many poems counts as a 'text' for coursework?

Poetry presents a particular dilemma as a coursework text choice, as the students will need to demonstrate that they have engaged with a full text of poetry, rather than merely the small number of poems that they may choose to reference in their essay. Wider knowledge of the poet's work, and the reasons for the selection of analysed poems as indicative of this work, might be a means to demonstrate this. If in doubt, you are encouraged to use the coursework checking service referred to above.

Examination text choices

Q: Are the exams all open book?

Yes. Clean copies must be used for the examination. No clean copies of the *Poems of the Decade* anthology are required for the A level paper 3 exam, as both poem choices will be printed in the source booklet, along with the unseen poem.

Q: Are there specific editions of texts that must be used?

There are specified editions of the poetry texts, which can be found in Appendix 5 of the A level specification. This is to ensure that all students have access to the same collection of poems, which can vary between published anthology versions. You are welcome to use any version of the other prescribed texts, although for the purposes of assessment these should be clean, un-annotated copies.

Q: Which edition of *Frankenstein* should be used: 1818, 1823 or 1831?

The 1831 is the most commonly used edition and we would recommend that you use that, however we are happy for you to use a different edition if you happen to have a stock of those. Both the 1818 and 1831 editions are available online. The exam doesn't use extracts. Students should quote accurately - or paraphrase from memory, from whichever edition they are using.

Q: Should I use text A or text B for *Doctor Faustus*?

You should use Text A.

Q: Which version of *Poems of the Decade* should we use?

Poems of the Decade has been republished since the initial development of the specification. However, the previous version (978-0-571-28173-2) and the newer version (978-0-571-32540-5) include the same poems, and the exact same subset of poems is set for study in both versions. Therefore, if you have already purchased copies of the earlier version (listed in the Literature specification v.1) then you can continue using this version. If you have not yet purchased the anthology, you will be able to purchase the newer version (listed in the specification v.2, on the website.)

Please note that although the poems themselves are the same, the pagination is different between the two versions. The list of page numbers and poems for both versions will be provided in the question paper, to accommodate students with either version of the anthology.

Q: Do we need to buy the *Poems of the Decade* anthology?

Yes. This is a published anthology and should be bought in the same way as any of the other prescribed literary texts on the specification. It is available via [Amazon](#) or [Faber and Faber](#), among others.

Q: Can students indicate in their poetry anthologies those poems which have been set for study, for example with an asterisk, to prevent them from responding on an incorrect poem?

In the A level examination, the two contemporary studied poems from which the students may choose to respond will be printed in the extract booklet, along with the

unseen contemporary poem (A level paper 3 section A). This means that there will be no confusion regarding the poems to be analysed and no requirement to take a clear copy of the text into the exam, unless specifically desired.

For the AS contemporary poetry assessment (AS paper 1 section A) and the A level movement/poet assessment (A level paper 1 section B) students will be required to self-select a second poem, from their studied list in the examination. The list of poems which have been set for study, including page numbers, will be provided in the extract booklet, so that students have clear sight of those poems from which they are expected to make their selection.

Different interpretations (A05)

Q: Can the students take their Shakespeare critical anthologies into the examination with them?

No. These are teaching and learning resources, not set texts, and so cannot be taken in to the examination.

Q: How can we order our free Shakespeare critical anthologies?

These are available for order via the [Stationery Box](#) facility.

You will need your centre number and school postcode to log in.

1. Log in.
2. Select 'stationery' from the blue stripe across the top of the page.
3. Click on the item you require.
4. Click on specify quantities.
5. Input the number you require.
6. Click on 'check out'.
7. Enter your email details if you would like to receive an email confirmation of your order.
8. Click on 'Submit request for items and check out'.

Q: Can we use other materials instead of/as well as the critical anthologies?

Yes. You are welcome to use any relevant critical materials to support your teaching of the Shakespeare play. Students are welcome to reference such materials in their assessment. The critical anthologies are teaching resources, and are not compulsory. On the other hand, if you wish to use nothing but the anthology in your teaching, that is also entirely appropriate.

Q: Do the students have to memorise sections of the critical anthologies to quote in their examination?

No. The anthologies have been produced to support the students in their own understanding of their studied texts, and to position this developing understanding within the wider context of different interpretations and alternative readings. If students do include short quotations, that is entirely appropriate, presuming that the quotation is

in support of the wider argument and relevant to the question. Students may also show their awareness of ideas from their critical reading through summarising, précising or evaluating a critical position, providing a supporting or contrasting point from their critical reading with supporting evidence from the play, or refining a critical position. Examples of how the critical material might be used are included in the introduction to the anthology, and there are also lesson planning materials available via the Edexcel website.

Q: How do the students show engagement with different interpretations at AS?

Students will respond to AO5 at AS through their response to 'other' drama. This will be in the form of an analytical essay, which responds to a given position. There is no requirement or expectation that students will draw upon material from outside of their studied 'other' drama text. Please see the [AS sample assessment materials](#) for examples of the question style. AS exemplar responses are also available on the Pearson qualifications website.

Context

Q: Which contexts do you intend for students to make reference to?

There are no pre-determined contexts that are more or less relevant than others. This will depend on the text(s) being studied, in which, for example, social context or political context may be relevant to an understanding of the text. In other texts, religious or historical context may be more valid. Literary context is also an appropriate lens through which to consider the studied texts. Any combination of relevant contexts that illuminate the understanding of the production and reception of the text(s) is acceptable. When answering questions which focus on particular aspects of the text, it is important that the contextual information provided is directly relevant, rather than being 'bolt-on', (general) context that does not illuminate the response to the particular question.

Contemporary Poetry

Q: Do we have to cover the whole *Poems of the Decade* anthology?

No. The poems that have been set for study can be found in Appendix 5 of the A level specification (and Appendix 4 of the AS specification, although the listed poems are the same.)

Q: Are there any resources to support the teaching of the anthology?

Yes. [The Poems of the Decade teachers' guide](#) is available on the Pearson qualifications website, and includes supporting information and teaching ideas for all of the poems which have been set for study.

Support is also available on the website for the teaching of [unseen poetry](#).

Q: How should we approach covering the poems?

You are welcome to cover the poems in any way that you see fit. However, you may like to approach the anthology by considering this as the study of *poetry*, rather than *poems* so that the students are also prepared, through their coverage of this selection, to deal with unseen poetry analysis as, of course, every poem is unseen prior to its first reading.

You may like to consider grouping the poems into clusters with similar features or themes and running some seminar-style sessions; some examples of possible groupings are suggested in the teachers' guide. This will support the students in the exam

preparation, wherein they will compare a studied poem to an unseen poem for A level, and a studied poem to a free choice of second poem from the same prescribed collection for AS level.

Comparison

Q: What is the difference between links and connections (2015 AO4) and connections and comparison (legacy 2008 AO3)?

The subject criteria have reduced the focus on comparison, so that assessments can now be constructed in which single texts are analysed in depth, rather than the 2008 specification focus, where texts tend to be predominantly presented in combinations. It is perhaps most helpful to think of how the act of comparing texts might be used to draw out more detailed analysis and understanding of the texts being considered, including any relevant similarities and/or differences between them, rather than thinking of comparison as an end in itself.

General

AS and A level co-teachability

Q: If students sit their AS exams, do their results carry forward to their final A level grade?

No. AS and A level are separate qualifications, so the AS results do not contribute to the A level grades.

Q: If the students achieve an AS grade, and then go on to achieve an A level grade, will they have UCAS points for AS and A level?

No. They will have an A level in their subject, with the associated points. As currently, AS points will only contribute for students for whom AS is their highest level of study in the subject.

Q: Can students sit AS exams and then continue into the second year and sit A level exams too?

Yes. The students would be assessed at the end of year 1, at AS standard, on the AS content. They would then be assessed at the end of the second year at A level standard, on the full A level content. This means that they would be assessed on the content they had already covered in their AS exams, only to a higher standard.

Q: Can students decide to continue to A level study after receiving their AS results?

Yes. However, bear in mind that results are not known until August and the AS exams will be in May/June. Students may need to continue with the course until the end of the academic year so that, in the event that they want to continue into year 2 following their results, they have not missed out on any course content or summer holiday work.

Q: Can all of the students be entered for AS as a progress-check or as an indicator of their abilities for university applications purposes, for example?

Yes, you can choose to enter all students for the AS examinations as a matter of course, and then return to their AS content in year 2 to review and bring them to the required A level standard.

Q: Can we ignore AS altogether and just focus on a two-year linear A level course?

Yes. If you do not wish to make entries for AS Level, you can teach the A level course content in any order.

Q: Can we decide halfway through the first year that some students will sit the AS after all?

Yes, but remember that if you have not organised the course to put AS content into year 1 then the students may not have covered all the AS exam content. If you think that you might want students to decide during the course, you should follow a course planner for a co-taught AS and A level cohort. That way, you ensure you have covered the AS content regardless of whether or not you end up having students who sit the AS.

Q: What texts/content do we need to cover in the first year, to ensure co-teachability?

For English Literature, you would need to cover 2 prose texts (at least one of which must be pre-1900), a selection of contemporary poetry, and one drama text. Please see the specification for AS or A level to see the text options for each text type.

For English Language and Literature, you would need to cover the Voices in Speech and Writing anthology, and two literary texts from the selected theme (including at least one of the prose 'anchor' texts.)

For English Language, you would need to cover language and context, individual language variation, and child language acquisition.

Examination scheduling

Q: When will the AS examination take place?

The timing of the AS examination is set in consultation between the awarding organisations and the Joint Council for Qualifications. Each year the Awarding Organisations and the JCQ agree the Common Timetable for the next academic year. For planning purposes, you should presume that the AS date will be broadly similar to now. Any changes will be communicated in good time via the Edexcel update and the English subject advisor.

Q: Will the 1 hour examinations be scheduled on the same day as one of the other papers?

The schedules for 2017 summer examinations have not yet been set. Once these have been agreed, we will make sure that you are informed, via the Edexcel website and the subject advisor.

To provide input into exam timetabling, you may like to email timetables@pearson.com where feedback is collated for future consideration.

Texts

Q: How long will the texts on the specification remain valid?

The subject criteria require that texts be reviewed throughout the lifetime of the specification to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. There are no plans to 'refresh' texts to a pre-determined timescale. This will depend to some extent on how long the 2015 specifications remain valid. In the event that any texts do need to be changed, you will be notified well in advance and appropriate alternatives will be listed on the website.

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