

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Exam board: AQA B Specification

Method of assessment: 80% written exam (two equally weighted papers). 20% coursework (two equally weighted essays, maximum 1,500 words each)

Length of exams: One two and a half hour, closed book paper; one three hour, open book paper

Texts

King Lear and Richard II by William Shakespeare
The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald
A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen
The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
Songs of Innocence & Experience by William Blake
plus one further prose text and one further poetry text for coursework.

Breakdown of units

1. Aspects of Tragedy (two and a half hour, closed book exam on King Lear, Richard II and The Great Gatsby). Tragedy is a classic and long established form of literature, centered on a flawed hero or heroine. The unit explores the recurring events, patterns and themes in tragedy. This is a way of thinking about the continuity and evolution of types of literature.
2. Elements of political and social protest writing (three hour, open book exam on A Doll's House, The Kite Runner, Songs of Innocence & Experience). In the modern world we may group texts together independently of the classical genres. These texts are centered on issues of power and powerlessness. This unit explores the effect of political and social issues on literature and the role of literature in making us reflect on the world around us.
3. Theory and Independence (coursework, two 1,500 word essays, one prose text, one poetry text). This module gives students the opportunity to explore texts that they have developed an interest in. It also gives students the opportunity to pursue their own areas of critical study, in such areas as narrative theory, feminism, cultural materialism, eco-criticism, post-colonialism and the role of the literary canon in the modern study of literature.

Overlap with other subjects

English Literature has a number of clear overlaps with other subjects such as Film Studies which centre on the deconstruction of the properties of texts. As an essay based subject, skills learnt in English Literature are easily transferred to a host of humanities based fields such as Sociology, Philosophy and Media Studies. This subject requires students to be effective independent learners which is a useful skill for all A-level subjects.

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