



English Literature Curriculum

Intent

Curriculum Vision

Literature and the Individual

At the very heart of English literature is the study of humanity and the self. Students will explore the inner thoughts of a 17th century poet and be able to make connection across the centuries, discovering how human emotion and experience in any era is reminiscent of our own. To engage with literature is to never feel alone.

Literature and the Wider World

Students use literature to connect with others from different contexts, cultures, societies and countries. Through an interdisciplinary approach students uncover the philosophical, historical, psychological and sociological themes within texts. Students develop an understanding of Feminist, Marxist, New Historicist and Postcolonial criticism in order to deepen the way in which texts are critically investigated.

Students are inspired to approach a variety of texts – from pre-1900 to modern day – with tenacity, curiosity and creativity. Students develop into strong confident communicators, deep thinkers, inquisitive readers, engaging writers and empathetic listeners with a life-long love of literature.

Concepts and Skills

Theoretical: Academic and critical understanding of a variety of critical discourses – reading, understanding and evaluating complex and critical theories and understanding how these theories have evolved and developed.

- Mastering a range of higher-levelled reading strategies: interpretation; decoding; analysing; judging.
- Intertextuality and Metacognition; an understanding of the place that the study of literature has in the wider world of academia.
- Applying critical interpretations and considering multiple interpretations of one text.
- Ability to read, understand and summarise complex critical essays.
- An understanding of Feminist, Marxist, Postcolonial, New Historicist, Psychoanalytical and Postmodern critical theories.

- An understanding of literary genres, movements and developments ranging from pre-1900s to present day.
- Critical understanding of pre-1900 poetry anthology, 'The Great Gatsby', 'Othello', 'Revolutionary Road', 'All My Sons' and 'Skirrid Hill'.

Analytical: Abstract understanding of literal, figurative and metaphorical effects of language – being able to explore how writers manipulate the effects and subtle messages created through their choice of words and use of literary techniques.

- Identifying language, structure, form, text types, lexical choices and literary methods.
- A critical understanding of the development of language and meaning, e.g. how has Shakespearean imagery influenced modern texts?
- A critical understanding of typicality in terms of literary tropes and devices.
- Applying critical interpretations and considering multiple interpretations of one text.
- Ability to critically and analytically draw precise and perceptive comparisons between texts.
- An understanding of typicality across genres, ideologies and critical theories.
- An awareness of specific contextual and historical factors that influence analysis of literary texts.
- An ability to consider multiple interpretations of texts from across the ages.
- An understanding of how other disciplines can influence analysis of texts.
- Moving beyond just the *how* and the *why* questions and considering *to what extent, how far does this criticism support my own interpretation, etc.*

Practical: Academic ability to communicate articulately and fluently.

- Writing for a variety of purposes: analytically, creatively and to evaluate.
- Understanding and awareness of the reader and context of criticism as part of wider critical discourses.
- Ability to develop a line of argument and guide the reader.
- Critical understanding of how discourses work in relationship with one another.
- Ability to understand the forms of a range of texts such as poetry, prose and drama.
- Valuing individuality and cultural diversity through the study of texts that span contexts and genres.
- Valuing individuality by exploring critics and authors that challenge gender, class and racial stereotypes.

Disciplinary Literacy

Disciplinary approach

In English Literature we support the development of disciplinary vocabulary and the students' ability to read, write and communicate at an academic level so that they master the nuances of the curriculum. Our intent is to equip students with the necessary tools needed to communicate effectively as academic literary critics. Students are required to dive into the complexities of texts that span genres and contexts and must maintain a consistently perceptive and analytical approach to these challenging texts. Students have access to texts from pre-1900 to present day and therefore must have an awareness of the shift in meanings, allusions, imagery and contexts.

Students are equipped with the keys needed to unlock the language of English academia so that they can immerse themselves in the wider discourse of the subject. Students will learn the required vocabulary to explore, challenge, critique and evaluate a variety of different texts. They gain a depth of historical and literary knowledge with the vocabulary necessary to make meaningful written and verbal contributions.

Interdisciplinary approach

In order to support the mastery of key concepts in English Literature, our interdisciplinary approach unites elements of Sociology, Philosophy and Ethics, History and Psychology. It is imperative that we teach students an understanding of these disciplines in order to develop their literary understanding of the importance of different critical perspectives.

Intellectual autonomy

In order to develop intellectual autonomy and confidence, we foster the willingness and ability of students in English Literature to comprehend challenging texts, assimilate key concepts and synthesise them with prior learning. Students are equipped to think critically and apply strategies independently so that they can form their own cohesive conclusions and be able to express that in writing. This is facilitated by a directed process of teaching students how to ask the necessary questions when approaching an unknown text. Students will develop the stamina and resilience to approach a variety of different challenging questions and problems that arise from reading literary criticism and provocative texts. They will develop the skills to write concisely, coherently and in a logical order.

Students are encouraged to engage in additional independent reading to deepen their literary understanding. The texts that are studied on the course include: *Othello*, William Shakespeare; *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald; *Revolutionary Road*, Richard Yates; *All My Sons*, Arthur Miller; and *Skirrid Hill*, Owen Sheers. The *Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory* is a key text for reference, and engaging audio content can be found in a number of podcasts that include *On the Road with Penguin Classics*, *The Great Books* and *The History of Literature*. For wider reading and to engage with critical ideas, we also encourage students to follow *Rebel Book Club* and *Between Two Books* Instagram accounts. We also recommend that English Literature students sign up to the academic journal website JSTOR where they can access 100 free online academic articles a month.

Application of Mathematics

The curriculum recognises the need for students to be able to apply mathematics effectively. In English Literature students use and develop their knowledge of quantities and measurements in order to logically plot literary and historical movements via timelines. Students will also need to manipulate abstract data, such as character development, and transform this data into charts and graphs in order to spot patterns and changes present in literary texts.

Independent Study

In English Literature students undertake both directed and self-directed independent learning activities that support the strengthening of long-term memory and retrieval. Independent study helps our students achieve mastery in English Literature and prepares them to work at an undergraduate level.

Directed independent learning tasks set in English Literature can include background reading to build knowledge and deeper connections to the existing frame of learning, or responding to interlocking questions on a given topic across more than one text source. Self-directed independent study in English Literature involves retrieval practice which is a crucial component of mastery. As students encounter challenges and learn to wrestle with demanding concepts and texts they develop not only their knowledge and understanding but also resilience through perseverance.

Instead of revision being perceived as something that is crammed into a few weeks, independent study supports spaced practice throughout the curriculum. By repeatedly returning to content covered, students' knowledge has time to 'rest and be refreshed'.

We recognise that not all students process material at the same rate. Students who need extra support to achieve mastery are supported by targeted intervention in English Literature where a staged or 'scaffolded' process is used to enable students to move from being dependent learners to autonomous ones.

All students have access to our Academy library where a wide range of academic texts, journals and other resources are available.

Implementation

Overview Statement

The curriculum in English Literature is sequenced coherently so that knowledge, concepts and skills are rigorously developed over time. This supports all students, including the most disadvantaged, and those with high levels of need, especially SEND. Planning is informed by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and Cognitive Theory which support students in building secure schemas.

Interdisciplinary links and the application of mathematics are explicitly referenced and exploited in order to deepen understanding. Vocabulary is developed in English Literature using the principles outlined in the Frayer Model and students are equipped to be able to read, write and speak like a literary critic. This is done not only by explicitly teaching vocabulary but also by exploring historical etymology and language change. When studying the works of Shakespeare it is important that students recognise how language and meaning change and develop over time. We therefore explore the nuanced developments in meanings of words so that students are able to consider how texts and their interpretations have developed over time.

Through the use of independent study resources in English Literature, students learn at greater depth so that they can become masters in English Literature and in the skills required to be intellectually autonomous. Throughout the course, students engage in project-based learning, presentations and whole-class debates, which require them to have a sense of ownership over their learning. Students are required to challenge critical approaches and textual interpretations, and to consider alternative views that are perhaps far beyond their own interpretations. As a result of this independent study, students become tenacious, academically rigorous, inquisitive and thoughtful.

Regular retrieval-based activities strengthen long-term memory and aid fluency, as do our cumulative mid-term and end-of-year assessments. Students will begin the course with explicit teaching of essay-writing skills that will gradually be reduced until they are able to write effectively entirely independently. The art of essay writing is a skill that requires time, dedication and perseverance to master and so support systems, such as essay writing skeletons, are in place throughout the course.

Technology is employed via a number of methods to strengthen learning. Students will be required to create their own PowerPoint presentations as part of their project-based independent study. Students will also be required to complete independent research and we encourage them to listen to academic podcasts and watch a range of free university lectures online.

Learning character is developed through key concepts of resilience and empathy. Students learn how to become masters of communication. They approach challenging concepts that will test their moral fibre, and learn how to challenge rigorously, listen intently and reflect meaningfully.

Impact

The Key Stage 5 curriculum builds upon students' initial understanding, extending their knowledge in the areas of literary analysis, understanding and evaluation. Through developing their knowledge of the development of literary genres, historical developments, critical movements and literary tropes, they are able to become effective communicators, fluent and articulate writers and empathetic listeners. Students also develop an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of their studies and this is supported through explicit cross-curricular links in History, Philosophy and Ethics, Psychology and Sociology.

Students use their knowledge of cognitive theory to recognise and use the most impactful methods of revision and retrieval practice.

Academic progress in English Literature is recognised through the A-level English Literature qualification, which acts as a benchmark of mastery; this provides students with the national currency needed for access to higher education and apprenticeship courses, and prepares them for a career in any workplace.