A Level English Literature (AQA - Spec B)

Head of Department: Miss L Derby

92% A*-C in 2026

Genre study is at the heart of English Literature B and we explore the genre of tragedy and political and social protest. Working with genre involves looking at the ways authors shape meanings within their texts. It also involves thinking about a range of relevant contexts, some to do with the production of the text at the time of its writing, some to do with how the text has been received over time, and how the text can be interpreted by readers now. Looking at texts as generic works involves connecting individual texts with others, as the whole idea of genre is a connective one. Because genres and their qualities are not fixed, this means interpretation is not fixed and that multiple interpretations are possible.

Literary Genres Exam – 40% - Aspects of Tragedy

At the core of all the set texts is a tragic hero or heroine who is flawed in some way, who suffers and causes suffering to others and in all texts there is an interplay between what might be seen as villains and victims. Some tragic features will be more in evidence in some texts than in others and students will need to understand how particular aspects of the tragic genre are used and how they work in the three chosen texts.

Texts and Genres Exam – 40% - Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing

Although it could be claimed that all texts are political, what defines the texts here is that they have issues of power and powerlessness at their core, with political and social protest issues central to each text's struture. The political and social protest genre covers representations of both public and private settings. All set texts foreground oppression and domination and they all look at the cultures we live in and have lived in over time.

Theory and independence Coursework – 20%

This component is designed to allow students to read widely, to choose their own texts and to understand that contemporary study of literature needs to be informed by the fact that different theoretical and critical methods can be applied to the subject. This area of the course provides a challenging and wide-ranging opportunity for an introduction to different ways of reading texts and for independent study. The title 'Theory and independence' highlights the important idea that, within a literature course, students should have the opportunity to work as independently as possible. This process is supported by the AQA Critical anthology, which has accessible extracts on the following critical methods and ideas:

- narrative theory
- feminist theory
- Marxist theory
- eco-critical theory
- post-colonial theory
- literary value and the canon

In this component, students write about two different literary texts. One of the texts must be a poetry text and the other must be prose.

What transferable skills does Literature provide?

Employers want people with motivation, intelligence, and the ability to work independently. An English Literature degree demonstrates these qualities. The ability to communicate is very valuable for almost any job. Studying English Literature teaches you how to write clearly and effectively, required for example when giving presentations and seminar discussions.

To which careers does Literature lend itself?

In essence any career that requires good communication skills, analysis, inference and argument – i.e. virtually all careers. But the typical destinations of Literature students include: management, administration, teaching and other education work, writing, publishing, PR and journalism.