



A level English Literature

Who is this course for?

The first question we ask at open evenings is, “Do you love reading?” There is only one acceptable answer for a student hoping to follow this course! This ever-popular A level is for students who not only find reading compelling, but who want to become better and more analytical readers, open-minded and adventurous about reading beyond their current experience. Studying the writing of others will enhance students’ own writing skills as they learn more about the way accomplished writers create characters, devise narratives or produce intensely moving poetry.

What are the entry criteria?

Students must have at least a grade B in GCSE English / English Language.

The English department at Wyke Sixth Form College

With ten teachers the English Department provides a wide range of specialisms and enthusiasms, so much so that we have written a separate leaflet about the staff, available at open evenings and from the department. We teach in The Wilson Building, in spacious classrooms which allow us to accommodate a variety of activities.

Literature students receive a course handbook, including a reading list, and all students are encouraged to subscribe to, or at least read, ‘The English Review’ and the ‘emagazine’ – both of which are available in the college library

The Department comprises:

*Belinda Hakes (Head of Department; course leader for A level Literature and GCSE Language and Literature)

Daniel Sproats

David Green (course leader for A level Language)

*Dianne Wood (course leader for English Language & Literature A level)

*Eleanor Marsden

*Jamie Farrow

Jenny West

Kerry Brant

Lesley May

Meg Williams

*Teaching A Level Literature 2011-12

Exam Board

AQA (Specification A, Option A)

Course Details

The course comprises two units for AS and two for A2, with 40% coursework in each year.

Independent wider reading is an integral element of both AS and A2.

The AS course takes us into the world of The Victorians. We immerse ourselves in the years between 1837 and 1901 and, acquiring appropriate contextual knowledge, look at the literature written during Victoria's reign. We also study more modern literature which is set during that time.

AS Unit 1: Texts in Context Assessed by examination at the end of the year

This unit combines a focus on wide reading and contextual understanding, with close analysis. The context element invites students to read widely, to synthesise their reading and to develop ways of using their knowledge to enable them to write skilfully on unseen texts from Victorian literature. The close focus concentrates on the work of one Victorian poet – currently Thomas Hardy, but subject to change by AQA.

AS Unit 2: Creative Study Assessed through coursework (2,500 words)

This unit takes as its focus two plays (for example, Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest' and Ibsen's 'A Doll's House') and one novel (for example 'Jane Eyre', 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles' or 'Wuthering Heights').

One element of the coursework invites students to compare the two plays within the context of Victorian life and the Victorian stage; the other to write an original analytical piece on the novel or to write in the precise style of the author, presenting a new section of the novel.

A2 Unit 3: Reading for Meaning Assessed through examination at the end of the year

This part of the A level synthesises the skills and learning of the whole course. It draws on students' wide reading, and from texts studied in class, on the theme of "Love Through the Ages". Students will study a wide range of prose, poetry and drama, from Chaucer to the present day, and be expected to analyse unseen texts in the examination and to make links from those texts to their wider reading.

A2 Unit 4: Extended Essay and Shakespeare Study Assessed through coursework (3,000 words)

Students will build upon prior knowledge of the works of Shakespeare, and will have one of his plays at the centre of their coursework. With teacher guidance they may choose the play and two additional texts (usually novels) and will write a literary essay which explores the writers' choices of form, structure and language, a range of reader interpretations, and the significance of the literary context in which the works were written.

How the course is delivered

Each class will have four 70 minute lessons a week. We teach this subject in a variety of ways, including tutorials, student presentations and group work. Integral to the subject is the exchange of ideas, interpretations and evaluations, and discussion is fundamental to students' learning. All students keep a detailed log of their wider reading, and this is taken in every half term so that we can monitor the reading and give appropriate guidance.

Departmental Enrichment

Past enrichment activities include theatre visits, visits to sites of literary significance such as Haworth, Grasmere and Stratford, talks from university lecturers, creative writing competitions and reviewing events at local literature festivals.

Students are encouraged to attend additional sessions for examination practice and one-to-one tutorials are always available – especially valuable for coursework preparation.

Student success

Achievement at A2 has been at 100% for many years now, and a significant proportion of A level Literature students progress to English or English-related degrees. Most recently these include Megan Ollerhead, an A* student, who is now reading English at York; Eve Bayram, also A*, reading Classics at Warwick. Several of our students are now studying Creative Writing; another is reading English and American Studies and another, Journalism. Lizzie Atkinson, who studied both Language and Literature at A level, is reading English at Oxford.

What does this course lead to?

“The best thing that A level Literature can lead to is a degree in English, followed by a post-graduate teaching qualification, leading in turn to a career as an English teacher.” That’s what the English staff at Wyke would say, as we all love what we do so much. Of course, there are other possibilities! A degree in English doesn’t restrict a graduate to a particular career, as it is an

indication of high achievement in valued generic skills such as analytical reading, informed evaluation and sophisticated writing. For many students the experience of extensive reading is nothing short of life-enhancing and will stay with them for ever.

What can I do now that would help prepare me for this course?

In one word: read! Anything and everything. But if you'd like your reading to be particularly appropriate to this course, take a leap into the classic novels of the Victorian age – or read what preceded them, in the early nineteenth century. Make use of your local museums and galleries and, of course, The History Centre, to immerse yourself in Victorian Hull and East Riding. See as much Shakespeare as you can, either on the stage or on film. See what's going on at your local theatres, and make sure that you know about Beverley and Hull Literature Festivals. Read the book reviews of quality newspapers, to see what's being written now.

During Wyke Start you'll be given some specific work to complete over the summer. Oh, did I mention reading?