



BEECHEN CLIFF

English Literature

A Level Curriculum Booklet

2025 - 2026

Head of Faculty: Mrs S O'Higgins

Subject Curriculum Intent:

"The study of English Literature enables you to develop the insight of an artist, the analytical precision of a scientist and the persuasiveness of a lawyer."

Professor Maureen Moran, Brunel University.

During the course, you will learn how to construct a sophisticated argument and analyse the structure and use of language and literary devices in a diverse range of texts. You will also learn about the social, historical and cultural context of English, Irish and American texts written over the course of five hundred years.

As well as being the number one subject for booklovers, studying English literature helps to sharpen your analytical skills. If you can take a text and find the themes and connect it with other texts, theories and historical events, you are showing that you can handle complex ideas, search for patterns and interpret information in a wider context. All these are highly marketable skills, vital for university and the world of work.

As well as being a gateway subject, highly regarded by Universities, studying English Literature also allows you to develop your emotional intelligence, allowing you to walk in the shoes of others or find resonances in your own lives and experiences. Obviously we want to encourage students to develop their interest in and enjoyment of literature and literary studies as you:

- Read widely and independently
- Engage critically and creatively with a substantial body of texts and ways of responding to them, including live or recorded performances/interpretations.
- Develop and effectively apply your knowledge of literary analysis and evaluation in writing.
- Develop the valuable transferable skills of sustained research and composition.
- Explore the contexts of the texts you are reading and others' interpretations of them.
- Develop a strong academic voice in your writing.
- Prepare for university study and the world of work as skilled and emotionally mature communicators and team members.

We employ a diverse range of teaching styles in order to ensure that students have a clear understanding of how to approach a literary text. We also understand that many students progress most through talk, so classroom discussions occur on a regular basis and you will work on a variety of research projects in small groups. You'll enjoy this course if you love reading for reading's sake and often find yourself immersed in the world of a book; you enjoy learning about the wider social, cultural and philosophical ideas which emerge from a text; you relish the opportunity to put forward your point of view on a given text and listen to the critical viewpoints of others. The course offers you the best opportunity to study an exciting range of modern texts as well as classic works, including *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Jez Butterworth's modern play *The Ferryman*. It also provides you with the freedom and flexibility to conduct your own independent reading project on an American novel. We encourage students to keep a journal, logging their reflections on their reading and compiling a helpful document of supporting material on the social and historical contexts of the texts they are studying. This might include, art, music and documentary evidence in addition to works of literature.

Subject Curriculum Implementation:

We begin the course proper with *The Great Gatsby* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House* - to allow all students to practise analysis and academic writing about two readily accessible texts. Yeats, Shakespeare and Chaucer are all studied once they are more confident analysts and writers. The Non examined assessment texts are tackled at the end of year 12 and beginning of year 13 when we know students will produce impressive work but well before they are preparing for their final examinations.

Although we require a minimum of GCSE grade 6 in Language and Literature, our students display a range of skills and aptitudes as readers and writers. We endeavour to support them with focused coaching in research skills, note taking and academic writing by providing templates and exemplars. The course outline below demonstrates how the course is covered and which key skills are taught every term.

A particular strength of our A Level English Literature course is the induction programme, which introduces all students to new ways of looking at texts, allowing those new to the school and existing Beechen Cliff students to share their varied GCSE experiences and expertise.

Students complete formal baseline, interim and final assessments on each text. This may take the form of an essay, a presentation or a formal discussion. Metacognitive wrappers are a feature of these assessments. Guided by their teachers, students complete a very short survey before and after each assessment, explaining the steps they took to prepare for it, the kinds of mistakes they made and how they intend to prepare differently next time. We find this opportunity for guided reflection ensures students are fully aware of their relative strengths and weaknesses and can build those all-important tiny habits which lead to success.

In recent years we have introduced a viva voce at the culmination of the course, where students prepare for a formal discussion with their teachers of one of the set texts. These have proved popular with students, allowing those who are less confident writers to shine whilst at the same time providing an opportunity to clarify their thinking and experiment with ideas before the formal examination.

Allocated Curriculum Time:

	Lower Sixth	Upper Sixth
Fortnightly lesson allocation	Eight hours	Eight hours

Course Information

Lower Sixth

Term	Curriculum Foci Areas		Assessment
1	<p>Hamlet: Introduction to Tragedy Background and context Study of characters Study of themes</p> <p>Hamlet: Literary techniques and close study of extracts Different critical viewpoints</p>	<p>Key skills In addition to honing those already taught ... Reading of poetry, prose and drama texts. Learning important contextual links. Learning more advanced key literary concepts and applying these in essay responses.</p>	<p>Essay set 1</p> <p>Close analysis + whole text (30 marks)</p>
2	<p>Hamlet: Literary techniques and close study of extracts Different critical viewpoints</p>	<p>Key skills In addition to honing those already taught ... Close comparison maps</p>	<p>Essay set 2</p> <p>Close analysis + Whole text</p> <p>Close analysis + whole text (60 marks)</p>
3	<p>Introduction to American Literature.</p> <p>The Great Gatsby: Introduction to the Jazz Age Study of characters and themes</p> <p>The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck and the context of the Great Depression and the Migration to California Reading and analysing the text</p>	<p>Key skills</p> <p>Bridging the gap from GCSE to A Level.</p> <p>Reading texts.</p> <p>Research tasks.</p> <p>Taking effective notes.</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>Leading and facilitating discussions.</p> <p>Essay writing at A Level</p>	<p>Essay set 3</p> <p>Baseline Gatsby – Initial impressions of the Buchanans-scaffolded question-AO3</p> <p>Baseline Grapes – Initial impressions of the Joads</p>

			<p>scaffolded question -AO3</p> <p>Essay set 4</p> <p>Gatsby – Chapter 3 focus “HOW DOES FITZGERALD CREATE AN IMPRESSION OF SUPERFICIALITY AND FUTILITY IN CHAPTER 3?” With extract-AO1 and AO3</p> <p>Grapes- Chapter 2</p> <p>Focus - Tom Joad and the Truck Driver</p> <p>How does Steinbeck present the tension between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ in the opening chapters?- with extract - AO1 and AO3</p>
4	<p>The Great Gatsby:</p> <p>Literary techniques and study of extracts</p>	Key skills	Essay set 5

Aspiration

Compassion

Independence

Respect

	<p>Different critical viewpoints.</p> <p>The Grapes of Wrath</p> <p>Steinbeck and the context of the Great Depression and the Migration to California</p> <p>Reading and analysing the text</p> <p>Preparing an independent reading research presentation on an American text of your choice</p>	<p>In addition to honing those already taught...</p> <p>Completing reading of texts.</p> <p>Reading and engaging with critical viewpoints.</p> <p>Learning key literary terminology and applying this in essay tasks.</p> <p>Presentations on chapters of Grapes of Wrath in small groups</p>	<p>Gatsby teacher – “At the heart of most American literature is a journey.”- AO1, AO3 and AO5</p> <p>Grapes teacher - “Compare the portrayal of physical, moral and social decay in John Steinbeck’s <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s <i>The Great Gatsby</i>”</p>
5	<p>A Doll’s House:</p> <p>Realism and theatre styles</p> <p>Background and context.</p> <p>Close study of play</p> <p>Coursework Poetry of WB Yeats</p> <p>Introduction to poetry component of coursework</p> <p>Study of selection of poetry and key themes</p>	<p>Key skills</p> <p>In addition to honing those already taught ...</p> <p>Revision techniques</p> <p>Comparison maps and close analysis attempts</p> <p>Crafting timed essays</p>	<p>Mock exam Hamlet – Oct 2021 paper (Hamlet/Ophelia and love)</p> <p>Grapes/Gatsby – Oct 2020 Paper (Social gatherings, journeys, corruption and greed)</p> <p>Yeats draft :</p> <p>Consider how Yeats presents (disorder, women, nationalism, change) in one of the poems from Michael Robartes and the Dancer.</p>

6	<p>A Doll's House: Realism and theatre styles Background and context. Close study of play</p> <p>Coursework - Dubliners Introduction Introduction to the comparative component of the coursework Study a selection of stories from Dubliners Introduction to Modernism Background and context Study of characters Study of themes Narrative style</p>	<p>In addition to honing those already taught ... Engaging with critical interpretations of poetry. Drafting a coursework essay. Produce first draft of coursework essay How to reference sources used in a coursework essay - footnotes and bibliography.</p>	<p>ADH – “Freedom is a condition towards which all humanity aspires.” In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the desire for freedom. (AO1, AO3 and AO5)</p> <p>Dubliners draft</p>
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Upper Sixth

Term	Curriculum Foci Areas	Assessment
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1	<p>Coursework - The Ferryman: Introduction to Jez Butterworth Study of characters Study of key themes Explore different critical interpretations of the play Explore context of The Troubles</p> <p>Dubliners: Complete study and comparison</p> <p>The Merchant's Prologue and Tale Introduction to mediaeval society and culture Reading portrait from The General Prologue Reading the Merchant's Prologue Study of Middle English</p>	<p>In addition to honing those already taught ... Advanced research methods Essay writing at A Level effective targeting of assessment objectives</p> <p>Yeats Coursework due final week before the half-term holiday. Final deadline.</p> <p>How to read a Middle English text.</p>	<p>Yeats final draft</p> <p>Dubliners and Ferryman first draft</p>
2	<p>Completion of coursework folder: How to compare texts Different critical viewpoints Drafting and writing final piece</p> <p>The Merchant's Prologue and Tale The Merchant's Tale. Study of critical interpretations of The Merchant's Prologue and Tale.</p>	<p>In addition to honing those already taught ... Incorporating critical viewpoints into essays Applying key literary terminology in essay tasks Further preparation for mock examinations and timed essay practice.</p>	<p>Merchant essay: choice of three questions</p> <p>'Fulfilment in life can sometimes be achieved through unexpected means.' In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore human fulfilment. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. [30]</p> <p>Or</p>

			<p>Literary works may praise honesty, but deceit is often more interesting.' In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore positive moral characteristics. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Literature often views wisdom as a very rare virtue.' In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore wisdom. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.</p> <p>Final Yeats coursework due</p>
3	<p>American Literature preparation:</p> <p>Revision and comparison The Great Gatsby and The Grapes of Wrath</p> <p>Preparing an independent reading research presentation on an American text of your choice</p> <p>Contextual study</p> <p>American Literature Extracts</p> <p>Begin preparing for the unseen element of the exam.</p> <p>Learning American context 1880-1940</p>	<p>In addition to honing those already taught ...</p> <p>Reading of a wide range of American texts</p> <p>Learning important contextual links</p> <p>Learning key literary concepts and applying in essay responses</p>	<p>Mock exam</p> <p>Mock Exam – Comparative and Contextual Study</p> <p>Final comparison coursework due by February half-term</p>

	<p>beyond the texts covered</p> <p>Studying exemplar material</p> <p>The Merchant's Prologue and Tale/A Doll's House:</p> <p>Revision of A Doll's House</p> <p>Comparing the texts</p> <p>Exam technique</p> <p>Addressing the AOs</p>		
4	<p>Hamlet</p> <p>Revise play: context, characters, themes, language analysis</p> <p>Re-read critical articles</p> <p>How to approach the extract question</p> <p>Preparation of Unseen component:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract analysis • Meeting the AOs 	<p>Complete re-reading of all texts.</p> <p>Engaging with critical articles.</p> <p>Effective revision techniques</p> <p>Timed essay practice.</p>	Mock exam – Drama and Poetry
5	<p>Revision and Exams</p> <p>Student-led revision of all texts</p> <p>Meeting the AOs</p> <p>Studying exemplar material</p> <p>Skills in comparing texts</p>	<p>In addition to honing those already taught ...</p> <p>Extract discussion and analysis</p> <p>Timed essay practice</p>	
6	Exams		

Reading List

Aspiration

Compassion

Independence

Respect

You would expect reading widely to be one of the cornerstones of successful study of English Literature at A level.

Set texts

A Doll's House	Henrik Ibsen
The Merchant's Tale	Geoffrey Chaucer
Hamlet	William Shakespeare
The Great Gatsby	F Scott Fitzgerald
The Grapes of Wrath	John Steinbeck
The Ferryman	Jez Butterworth
Michael Robartes and the Dancer	W B Yeats
Dubliners	James Joyce

Obviously you have your set texts to read, but it would be beneficial and enjoyable for you to read around these. You could read more written by the author or written in the same genre. Academic papers, reviews, critical works and links to online articles to support the study of each text will be distributed to students by their teachers. What follows is a list of suggestions to enrich your study of our course, but regular reading of any sort is nothing but a good thing. Use these as an opportunity to bring extended ideas to the class.

Suggested further reading

Chaucer

Terry Jones,	Medieval Lives
Ian Mortimer,	The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England
Liza Picard,	Chaucer's People: Everyday Lives in Medieval England

Shakespeare

Bill Bryson,	Shakespeare: The World as a Stage
Michael Pennington.	Hamlet: A User's Guide
James Shapiro,	1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare

Ibsen

McFarlane, J., ed.	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen</i> . New York: CUP, 1994.
Anton Chekov	The Cherry Orchard, Uncle Vanya, The Seagull
George Bernard Shaw	Pygmalion, Man and Superman, Major Barbara
August Stindberg	Miss Julie
Oscar Wilde,	An Ideal Husband

American Literature

Aspiration Compassion Independence Respect

William Faulkner, *Light in August*, *The Sound and the Fury*

Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*

Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

Richard Wright, *Native Son*

Anita Loos, *Gentleman Prefer Blondes*

John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

John Dos Passos, *USA Trilogy*

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*, *The Age of Innocence*

The Norton Anthology of American Literature 1865-1914

The Norton Anthology of American Literature 1914-1945

Very Short Introductions

Stephen Aron, *The American West: A Very Short Introduction*

Elijah Wald, *The Blues: A Very Short Introduction*

Jonathan Bate, *English Literature*

David Wallace, *Chaucer: A Very Short Introduction*

Susan Ware, *American Women's History: A Very Short Introduction*

Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Very Short Introduction*

Other

Try to read material from the 'prizes' e.g. The Man Booker prize or the Orange prize

Try to get into reading a broadsheet newspaper weekly

Try to read a range of non-fiction writing such as travel writing (Bryson, Palin), autobiography (*Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela), biography etc.

Useful websites

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books>

<http://www.themanbookerprize.com>

<http://www.goodreads.com>

<http://www.womensprizeforfiction.co.uk>

Reference Books

A Dictionary of Literary Terms by Martin Gray

Doing English by Robert Eaglestone

How to Write Better Essays by Bryan Greetham

Oxford concise companion to English Literature by Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer

Pastoral by Terry Gifford

The Ode Less Travelled by Stephen Fry

The Poet's Craft by Sandy Brownjohn

Magazines/Journals e.g. The English Review or eMag from The English and Media Centre

The Times Literary Supplement – a weekly literary review

Literary Events

These events take place each year and are worth visiting as you are more than likely to meet some famous literary faces!

THE GUARDIAN HAY FESTIVAL May/June <http://www.hayfestival.com>

BBC PROMS LITERARY FESTIVAL July/Sept <http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms>

Be adventurous in your reading for pleasure.

For example, once you have read Enduring Love by Ian McEwan perhaps then read Saturday or On Chesil Beach or Atonement. Or once you have read A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon then perhaps read Life of Pi by Yann Martel or Great Expectations by Charles Dickens or Spies by Michael Frayn. Your English teachers or the Librarian will be happy to make recommendations.

Studying/Revision Information

Ongoing Studying

We structure the course helpfully to allow students not only to cope with the large amount of required reading but to thrive, building research, note-taking, analytical and academic writing skills gradually. In addition to the four hours of face to face study every week, students tend to complete another eight hours of independent study. This takes the form of reading, research, listening to lectures, watching dramatic productions, preparing for seminars and tutorials. On average students write one essay per week. An openness to new ideas, willingness to share opinions and provide a reasoned, evidence-based argument is also an advantage on this course.

Revision

Plenty of time is devoted to study and revision skills in lessons and in the tasks set as independent study. The faculty has produced a series of wide-ranging independent study and revision guides to assist students in building their knowledge. In addition, drop-in clinics and teacher masterclasses are a significant part of the way we prepare students for their final examinations.

Useful resources:

Students will need to purchase their own copies of all the set texts but the school has an extensive library of recommended reading that is available to sixth form students of English Literature as well as our comprehensive in-house revision and independent study booklets for all examination and coursework texts. The English faculty subscribes to Massolit, an excellent online platform hosting hundreds of short lectures on works of literature delivered by University academics. Other recommended resources are listed in the course reading list.

Final Assessment Structure:

Component	Weighting (%)	Content	Proposed Examination Date
1	40%	Drama and poetry pre-1900 Shakespeare – Hamlet close analysis and thematic essay Comparative essay - Ibsen and Chaucer	May/June
2	40%	American Literature 1880-1940 Close reading in chosen topic area Comparative and contextual essay – The Great Gatsby and The Grapes of Wrath	May/June
3	20%	Non examined assessment Literature post 1900 Critical piece OR re-creative writing piece with commentary on Yeats's poetry Comparative essay – Dubliners and The Ferryman	Final folder submitted for moderation March

Please see Exam Board websites for up to date information:

[AS and A Level - English Literature - H072, H472 \(from 2015\) - OCR](#)