

# AS / A Level English Literature

AQA English Literature B (1746 / 2746)

"Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon."

George Bernard Shaw (Pygmalion)

# Is A Level English Literature for me?

This course is a great choice for you if...

- You enjoy reading... and perhaps even read independently for pleasure!
- You take pleasure in discussing texts and listening to other interpretations.
- You like exploring ideas through writing.
- You plan to go on to study English Literature at University.
- You enjoy getting to grips with the big questions, concepts, psychology, philosophy, society, language, human nature.....

“Every man's work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself . . .”

Samuel Butler (The Way of all Flesh)

## AS / A Level Overview

- The AS / A Level course is divided into four main modules (two are completed in year 12 and two in year 13).
- You will be able to study a wide range of texts and genres from different periods of history.
- There are both coursework and examination elements to the course and you will be able to study texts in a great deal of depth and detail.

"Nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose . . ."  
Mary Shelley (Frankenstein)

# Course Outline

## AS Level:

Unit 1 – Aspects of Narrative (exam on two novels and two poets)

Unit 2 – Coursework (examining two plays in tragic genre)

## A Level:

Unit 3 – Texts and Genres (exam on various texts from Gothic or Pastoral genre)

Unit 4 – Further and Independent Reading  
(coursework examining, comparing and applying criticism to choice of texts)

# Unit 1 – Aspects of Narrative

- This unit is designed to introduce you to some new fascinating and contrasting texts and build your skills in being able to understand how narratives are constructed by authors...
- You will be able to study such novels as "Enduring Love", "The Great Gatsby" or "Birdsong" alongside the poetry of Coleridge, Hardy or W H Auden.
- This unit will give you an opportunity to extend your enjoyment of novels and poems through a deeper understanding of their authors, the context in which they were written and the way they have been constructed.
- The final exam (worth 30% of A Level) is open text and is taken at the end of year 12.

"The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means." Oscar Wilde (The Importance of Being Earnest)

# Unit 2 – Dramatic Genres

- This unit introduces you to the complex and fascinating dramatic genre of tragedy...
- Your exploration of the plays will lead you to discussions about the psychology of the different tragic heroes in addition to the genre as a whole.
- You will study two plays (one of which is Shakespeare) and examine an aspect of the tragic genre within them.
- This unit is internally assessed and you will produce a coursework portfolio consisting of an essay on each play.

“Shakespeare is the happy hunting ground of all minds that have lost their balance.” James Joyce – Ulysses

## Unit 3 – Texts and Genres

- This unit aims to build on your skills and knowledge from both of the AS units.
- You will study a range of texts looking at either the Pastoral or the Gothic genre.
- This unit will allow you to compare texts from different periods and authors in order to examine how the genre has changed and developed.
- You could, for example, study “Dr Faustus” (Marlowe), “Wuthering Heights” (Bronte) and “Dracula” (Stoker) during your close study of the Gothic Genre.
- This unit is assessed by a 2 hour exam (closed book) and as with Unit 1 is designed to allow you to show your understanding of different elements of the text.

“ . . . there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.”

Oscar Wilde “The Picture of Dorian Gray”

# Unit 4 – Further and Independent Reading

- This unit is designed to introduce you to a wide range of texts – some of which may be of your own choosing.
  - You will also be looking closely at different types of literary criticism during this unit and learning how to apply these in your own analysis of texts.
  - The critical aspect of this unit also leads you to consider the more universal ideas underpinning Literature – how do we determine which texts should be given high status?
  - You will produce a portfolio containing two pieces of work:
    1. A comparative study of your two texts (eg. a comparison of the presentation of a dystopia in 1984 and Brave New World)
    2. The application of critical ideas to either one or both of these texts.
- “. . . provided that nothing like useful knowledge could be gained from them, provided they were all story and no reflection, she had never any objection to books at all” Jane Austen (Northanger Abbey)

# Examinations

- There are two examinations, one at the end of AS (year 12) and one at the end of A2 (Year 13)
- Both exams are worth 30% of the total A Level and both are a written paper of 2 hours
- LITB 1 (AS) is open text (books allowed)
- LITB3 (A2) is closed text
- Both papers are designed constructively to allow you to demonstrate understanding of different aspects of the texts you have studied

"By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes..."  
Shakespeare (Macbeth)

# Coursework

- Both LITB 2 and LITB4 will allow you to explore your own ideas, interpretations and understanding of texts in depth and detail.
- You will have access to a range of critical material which will help develop your own critical views and expression.
- LITB 4 gives you a unique opportunity to independently choose texts for study and your own critical exploration.
- You will be constantly developing your own vocabulary, confidence in interpretation and ability to structure a coherent and interesting argument.

"A person who has not done one half his day's work by ten o'clock, runs a chance of leaving the other half undone."  
Emily Bronte (Wuthering Heights)

# Results Summer 2009

- AS
- 42.9% achieved grade A
- 71.5% achieved grades A – B
- 90% achieved grades A- C
  
- A2
- 24% achieved grade A
- 70.6% achieved grades A – B
- 100% achieved grades A - C

So finally... if you have enjoyed studying Literature at GCSE and would relish the opportunity to read, enjoy, write about and discuss more fascinating texts, then this is an excellent course for you!

"Good night, good night! parting is such sweet sorrow"

Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet)