

English Literature

at MSJ Sixth Form



The study of English Literature at A-level will lead you to an appreciation of books that are stimulating and interesting in themselves. You will also acquire a broad overview of the important movements of cultural history, as literature is always studied in relation to the contexts that have influenced its creation.

Through the interpretation of texts, you will become more analytical and precise in your thinking - perhaps the most important of the transferable skills that you will develop. At the same time, you will become more aware of the possibilities of language and inevitably, therefore, you will add to your skills as a communicator in both the written and spoken word.

TO PURSUE THE A LEVEL COURSE SUCCESSFULLY, PUPILS IDEALLY NEED A MINIMUM OF:

GCSE English Language Grade 6

GCSE English Literature Grade 6

WHAT DOES THE COURSE INVOLVE?

The course includes a detailed study of 'Twelfth Night', in many ways the richest and most charming of Shakespeare's plays, and a comparative study of Chaucer's 'The Merchant's Tale' and Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' in which you will focus on the very different treatment of particular themes in different time-periods. In the 'Women in Literature' module you will study novels by Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen, and also cover wider reading in preparation for the 'Unseen' study in the final paper. Finally, you will produce a coursework folder of two essays: one a comparative study of T S Eliot and James Joyce, and the other a detailed commentary on a work of modern drama. By the end of the course, you will have acquired a broad knowledge of books, authors and cultural history, and will be able to write with insight and authority on cultural subjects.

IS IT THE RIGHT COURSE FOR ME?

What skills will I need?

English is well suited to students who are interested in reading, discussion and the arts in general. If you are intrigued by what a strange exhibit in a museum really means, then you probably also have an instinct for exploring below the surface of a text, where it means more than just 'a good story'. It might be that you have experimented with writing of your own or have experienced in your own reading a sense of how powerful or illuminating good writing can be.

WITH WHICH OTHER SUBJECTS DOES IT WORK BEST?

English works well with other Humanities subjects. It is also a natural companion for Modern Foreign Languages (which usually also involve some study of Literature and cultural background) and also for artistic subjects (the study of different artistic periods in English is excellent background for Drama or Art, for example). Also, English works well as a self-contained stand-alone subject for students who are studying Maths and Sciences or Maths and Economics, who want one cultural subject to vary their portfolio.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAREER PATHWAYS?

An A Level in English Literature is highly valued by institutions of Higher Education and provides a wide range of opportunities for courses at degree level, and is therefore a stepping stone towards many possible careers. As well as the obvious (journalism, publishing, advertising, academia), the best-paid careers in law, finance, management, public administration and even computing are accessible via an English qualification.

HEAD OF SUBJECT

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EXAM BOARD

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HOW IS IT ASSESSED?

The course is assessed through two written examinations and one coursework folder. Both papers are two and a half hours long, one covering Shakespeare, Chaucer and Ibsen, the other covering the 'Women in Literature' module. The coursework folder will be 3000 words long and cover Eliot, Joyce and a work of modern drama.