

Overview of GCSE English Literature

Students are required to study a range of whole texts in detail, including:

- at least one play by Shakespeare
- at least one 19th century novel
- a selection of poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry
- fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards.

All works should have been originally written in English.

In the examination, students are also required to respond to 'unseen' text(s). These unseen texts may or may not be by authors whose works students have studied as set texts.

AO1 Overview

AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:

- **maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response**
- **use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretation**

Students need to show an understanding of whole texts, characters and themes. They should be able to give a personal insight into texts, giving their own opinion on them. Students should select appropriate words and phrases from texts to support their ideas and, in the exam, where they do not have the text in front of them, they should be able to paraphrase or make reference to key events, ideas and quotations.



AO1 Support Strategies

- *Source versions of the set texts in L1 and encourage pre-reading of texts. For those not literate in L1, graphic novels may help students to familiarise with events, characters and themes in texts new to them. Abridged texts, simplified English versions of texts and digital texts using text-to-speech software might also be helpful*
- *Train students to make best use of translation tools and help them to learn how to use L1 to support their learning. Apps such as Google Translate and SayHi, and C-Pens could be used*
- *Develop academic oracy and promote opportunities for collaborative talk prior to writing. Drama and role-play activities, presentations, dictogloss and socratic talk activities will likely support students develop their writing*
- *Support students with the acquisition of appropriate language to be able to take a critical approach to texts, such as by rehearsing the use of key vocabulary, in context, orally before writing*

AO2 Overview

AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate

Students need to be able to consider how both language and structure are used in texts and explain how the writer has used techniques to create effects, considering the impact on the reader/audience. If possible, students should be able to use subject terminology, such as word types (eg adjectives, nouns, verbs) and different sentence structures (eg minor, simple or complex sentences), when discussing a text's language and structure.



AO2 Support Strategies

- *Where possible, and where a student is literate in L1, source a text in L1 to model this skill. Rehearse highlighting key words and discuss why such words have been used and their impact on the reader/audience*
- *To help students get used to this AO, provide copies of extracts with key target words already highlighted*
- *Encourage students to verbalise the specific impact of particular words, avoiding generic comments, and encourage collaborative tasks prior to writing to help build students' confidence with analysing language*
- *Read through model answers with students, annotating how the impact on the reader/audience is discussed*
- *Help students with using a writing frame (such as Point, Evidence, Explanation and Development)*
- *Call-out games, such as Follow Me, Bingo and Vocabulary Jenga, as well as word matching exercises, such as Word Races, can help students to develop an understanding of the necessary subject terminology*

AO3 Overview

AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

Students should be able to show an understanding of the different kinds of context which affect authors' work and readers' responses to it, relevant to the text and to the question they are asked. Context can include information on the author's own life and situation, including when the text was written or first staged/published. It can also include the historical setting, the social or cultural context, the literary context of the text, such as the literary movement or genre, and also how texts are received by different audiences, such as how it would be received by a modern audience in contrast to when first written/staged.

AO3 Support Strategies



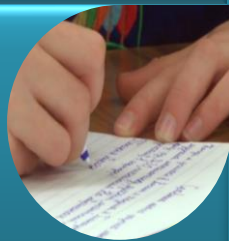
- Schools should think carefully about the choice of set texts chosen as part of the GCSE course. Many exam boards have expanded the range of set texts to include more diversity, including texts from British authors from a range of different backgrounds
- If possible, find a text or poem from a student's L1/county of origin and, together, research the contexts, discussing the relevance in relation to the events and characters, and how different audiences might respond.
- Word clouds or graphic organisers could help students to think about all the different contexts of a text and their significance, including the authorial viewpoint and messages conveyed to the reader/audience
- Use a range of multi-modal sources to aid students' understanding of the different contexts of the set texts, including videos, pictures and artefacts

AO4 Overview

AO4: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation

Students should be encouraged to use a wide range of vocabulary when discussing texts. Spelling should be accurate and range of punctuation should be used effectively, with control. Sentence lengths and structures should be varied.

AO4 Support Strategies



- Explicitly talk through how vocabulary, punctuation and different sentence structures are used in a text in L1. Compare this directly with a text in English (this can help students to address grammatical errors in their own writing in English)
- Provide model exemplar responses to an exam style question and highlight the range of punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures used. Discuss why such techniques have been used and their impact
- Encourage students to keep a vocabulary list specific for each text they study. This could include words related to the genre of the text, literary terms and subject-specific words related to the context of the writing
- Work on a checklist of techniques students could use in their own writing. They could create their own word games, such as Bingo, where peers have to listen out for particular vocabulary used as students read their work aloud. Play creative games with sentences – repeating ideas using different sentence types/structures

Links



- [Using first language as a tool for learning – an aide-mémoire](#)
- [Accessing the curriculum through first language student training programme](#)

- [Wikipedia](#) (useful for plot overviews and contextual information in different languages)
- [Book Creator](#)
- [EMTAS Secondary App Wheel](#)

Exam Boards:

- [Pearson Edexcel](#)
- [OCR](#)
- [AQA](#)
- [CCEA](#)
- [Eduqas](#)