

Bishop Vesey's Grammar School – English Department

English Literature Curriculum Overview

What is A-level English Literature?

At Bishop Vesey's Grammar school we offer English Literature A level. The course is challenging and offers a deep and wide-ranging engagement with Literature from a historicist and thematic perspective. Over the two years, students will compare texts by different authors, genres and time periods.

What topics will I learn?

Students explore the theme of love through the ages. Studying a range of literature including prose, play and poetry, students explore typicality of texts, themes, characterisation and context. Literature from across time is explored, including Shakespeare. In addition, students prepare for an unseen element, requiring them to explore unseen poetry and prose from across time based on the broad theme of love. Students are also taught an historicist approach exploring modern and postmodern literature from 1945 to present day. Students will also study a text independently applying the taught skills from other literature to the exploration of material of their choice. Learning how to compare texts, students explore the similarities and differences in presentation, context, and authorial intent.

How will I study?

Two teachers teach each Literature class.

Students will study each of the taught texts in depth through shared reading, textual analysis, discussion and debate. A sound grasp of context will be needed to illuminate their understanding of texts as well as an historicist approach in order to compare and contrast literature. For the unseen requirements, students will explore a wide range of poetry across time and modern/postmodern prose becoming familiar with styles and typicality. Whenever possible, we offer theatre trips and access to university lectures about the studied texts.

All students are expected to make detailed notes and, ideally, own copies of each text to allow thorough annotation of the materials. Students take ownership of their study and in addition to class work create revision portfolios tracking themes, characters and writers' methods.

Whilst a love of Literature and an understanding of how prose, poetry and drama have changed over time is paramount, we also study how to write an essay and teach carefully using modelling, exemplar materials and writing strategies.

There is an expectation of all students to complete wider reading. A reading list is provided and further reading is recommended throughout the course. Students of Literature are passionate about reading and theatre and are keen to widen their knowledge of texts.

How will my work be assessed?

Assessments are frequent and enable all students to become familiar with the assessment objectives. Assessments are examination-style essay responses and are marked thoroughly by the class teacher. Exemplar materials, model answers and exam board guidance is used to provide detailed feedback linked to each assessment objective. Furthermore, students complete work which is peer and self-assessed, again supporting their understanding of the assessment criteria. Each teacher-assessed piece is followed by a DIRT feedback lesson. In addition to the classroom assessments, the department welcome additional practice essays from students as they approach examination periods.