

English



Information for
students and parents

ENGLISH

English, with its combination of technical and creative elements, is a peculiar subject with no clear limits – it is a humane and civilising project and, in our experience, pupils enjoy English in the Sixth Form because their own personal contribution really matters. The English Department, with its wealth of material and intellectual resources, aims to equip our students with the skills needed to speak confidently and fluently, and to write with accuracy and sophistication; we aspire to instil in students a lasting enthusiasm for literature and to ensure that this wonderful subject is something rich and strange for all our students for all their time here – and, as importantly, beyond.

THE COURSE

The course is very wide-ranging, and we expose students to as great a variety of drama, poetry and fiction as possible. The coursework module also allows students with a specialised interest in a particular author or period to explore and to pass on their personal enthusiasms as we give them free rein in choosing one of their texts. Discussion of literature ranges broadly across historical, political, philosophical, moral and psychological issues as well as offering an insight into the history of the English language and linguistic change. We study literature as a means of questioning our deepest held beliefs, whilst also allowing us to empathise with situations and states of mind we are yet to encounter, so that when we do face them we are all the better prepared.

Our students are taught in small, friendly groups to enable all of them to participate confidently. We are lucky to be based in the stunning surroundings of the Rosemary Langley Room overlooking the Rose Garden at Ryan House. In such comfortable conditions, it's no wonder that the English Department is renowned for its successes at A-level. Many girls go on to read English at university; extension sessions and specialist support through the application process are offered by the department.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

English in the Sixth Form isn't all about exams. We offer a rich programme of cultural activities that enhance the students' response to literature. For instance, we maintain that drama should be seen and so organise regular theatre trips including, this year, a trip for both Lower 6 and Upper 6 to see 'Othello' at the 'Tobacco Factory Theatre' in Bristol, and an outing for the Upper 6 to London to take part in the 'Poems of the Decade' conference – featuring performances by Simon Armitage and Ros Barber. We also take regular outings to the local theatres for productions and look to explore the curriculum in environments outside of the classroom whenever we can.

OUR ANNUAL STRATFORD TRIP

We believe that our famous annual trip to Stratford with the Lower 6 is a unique and enriching experience for our girls; it ignites a spark about Shakespeare and about literature that goes well beyond what can be achieved in a classroom.

Last year, during our stay, we saw three plays including, 'Titus Andronicus' and 'Salome'. We attended some superb lectures at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust with our old friend Dr Nick Walton, interactive pre and post-performance talks on all the plays as well as an energetic RSC workshop based on 'Othello' and some wonderful talks with actors and directors. We also visited the church to pay respect to our hero's grave, shimmied up the Tower, learned how to stab each other and create stage blood in the Wigs and Makeup demonstration, had a fascinating backstage tour and visited all the Shakespeare properties. The current Lower 6 are already looking forward to their trip next July!

COURSE OVERVIEW

ASSESSMENT

The course will be assessed through three open book examination units on drama, prose and poetry. These units are worth 80% and will be examined at the end of the course. There is also a coursework component (Unit 4), which takes the form of a comparative essay between 2500 and 3000 words. This coursework unit is worth 20%.

CONTENT

Exam Board: Edexcel

Unit 1 - Drama

Shakespeare play and a tragedy or comedy.

(30% of the total mark.)

Unit 2 - Prose

Comparison of two prose texts.

(20% of the total mark.)

Unit 3 - Poetry

Edexcel's anthology of post-2000 poems.

Victorian or Romantic poetry.

(30% of the total mark.)

Unit 4 - Coursework

Extended comparative essay.

Two texts linked by a theme or movement.

(20% of the total mark.)

The specification requires students to show knowledge and understanding of prose, poetry and drama; as such our study will include an exploration of two plays, two novels and a selection of poetry.



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