

## **A LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE FAQs**

### **Q: What are the entry requirements for A level English Literature?**

We require a grade 5 in GCSE English Language and the same in GCSE English Literature.

### **Q: Is A level English Literature a big step up from GCSE English Literature?**

Many of our students comment on the fact they whilst they do find it a rather large step up in terms of the demands placed on you as a student, they also felt that the support they were given early in Year 12 really helped them to make the transition a successful one. Perhaps the biggest difference between the A level and GCSE is the way you will tackle the texts (books, plays and poems) we study. We try to move you away from a GCSE style 'micro analysis' of texts and move towards a wider consideration of the way literary texts are read and understood. Each of the exam questions pushes you to form an argument so you will move away from a rather neutral consideration of the way literary texts are constructed and move towards a critical interpretation of texts. The questions ask you what you think, and you must respond by forming an argument and supporting it with good quality evidence from the texts.

### **Q: What kind of student do I need to be to be successful in this subject?**

This subject tends to attract students who still enjoy picking up a book and reading. It's for those students who enjoy the process of reading fiction and then considering the ideas it raises. If you enjoy examining and exploring ideas, and like debating and discussing critical possibilities, you will enjoy this subject. This is an academic A Level and the demands are great so expect to be tested in this subject. If you're not a fan of reading books, you won't enjoy this subject! If poetry leaves you cold, you won't enjoy this subject!

### **Q: Why is English Literature a good subject to study at A level?**

English Literature is one of the most well regarded A Levels available. It has been described as a 'facilitating subject' by Russell Group universities for several years. The word 'facilitating' suggests that universities believe this is one of a few subjects that best prepares students for HE level study. The skills you develop will be transferable into all sorts of situations. You will become a confident critic, a strong writer and a confident speaker. You will have developed the ability to critically evaluate complex texts and develop sophisticated responses to them. Your

academic writing will improve, and you will become a fluent speaker as you will have had the chance to practise your discussion and debating skills in class many times during your two years of study. Oh...and you get to read some great books and talk to lots of like-minded people about them!

### **Q: What are English literature lessons like?**

Debate and discussion are key in this subject. We will often identify key moments from one of the set texts and we will try to evaluate it in some detail. This will often involve some paired or small group work at first before we open the discussion to the wider class. You will hear others' opinions on the texts and will discuss and debate the critical possibilities developing confident interpretations. You will start to see that literary texts can be examined from several different critical perspectives and your eyes will be opened to the idea that a literary text is not static and that meanings change depending on your approach.

### **Q: How many students are in a typical English Lit class?**

We generally have between 20 and 25 students in a class at A Level. The classrooms are generously sized and will comfortably accommodate 25 students.

### **Q: What books do we do?**

In your first year you will tackle the genre of Tragedy. The set texts are:

- *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller
- The poetry of John Keats

In your second year of study, you will be tackling the genre of Crime. The texts for study are:

- *When Will There Be Good News?* By Kate Atkinson
- *Brighton Rock* by Graham Greene
- *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

You will notice that the first year is dominated by drama texts and the second year is dominated by prose texts. We will read the texts together in the first year and you will have the summer between the two years to read the two novels on the course. You will be expected to purchase your own copies of the books (except for the Keats' poetry and the Coleridge text in the second year). You will be expected to read independently at times, and you will have to have read the two novels before we begin studying them as a class in the early parts of the second year.

**Q: What can I do with my English Literature A Level?**

An A Level in English Literature opens all sorts of doors. As it's so well regarded as a subject, your UCAS application will really benefit from its presence. The skills you will develop on the course are applicable to all sorts of academic courses at university. Students who take English lit often go on to study courses in Law, English Literature, History, Politics, Sociology, Psychology, Creative Writing, Linguistics etc.

**Q: Any more questions?**

If you have any questions that are not covered in this document, please feel free to contact the college or email the English Literature Course Leader, Jason Prince, directly: [jason.prince@bilborough.ac.uk](mailto:jason.prince@bilborough.ac.uk)