

English Literature & Language at Samuel Whitbread Academy

Intent

In Key Stage 5 English, we seek to develop students' appreciation and passion for the written word beyond what is studied at GCSE level. This is achieved by introducing students to a wider variety of more challenging texts from various literary genres and movements, and by fostering a great sense of student independence and curiosity to read more widely beyond the set texts themselves. In both English Literature and English Language and Literature, we also use the non-examination coursework unit to grant students the choice to explore an area of English study that corresponds to their own personal interests, rather than simply what is set by an exam syllabus.

Key Stage 5 English courses favour open and deep in-class discussion, which allows students to develop their independent thoughts about a text, as well as improve their oratory and argumentative skills. We are also dedicated to providing students with many opportunities to develop their learning beyond what is discussed in the classroom itself, such as through online and live lecture series, wider reading lists and degree-level academic essays. Ultimately, we understand that studying English at Key Stage 5 fosters independence, creativity and an appreciation of wider cultural and ethical issues, through one of the most rewarding and valuable disciplines available.

Implementation

A Level English Language and Literature at Samuel Whitbread Academy is split into three components: Voices in Speech and Writing, Varieties in Language and Literature and Non-Examination Assessment (coursework). This allows students to explore a comprehensive range of literary and linguistic disciplines, genres and movements whilst developing core skills of analysis and contextual appreciation. Our Language and Literature lessons follow the Edexcel A Level English Language and Literature curriculum, with content delivered by two expert teachers. Each exam component involves two sections, with summative half-termly assessment for each. Discussion is central to the development of students' verbal skills and ideas, and students receive continuous feedback, both verbal and written, from their peers and teachers to allow them to reflect and improve.

At Samuel Whitbread Academy, we also have a key focus on developing pupils' literacy and reading skills so that they can construct academic essays at a consistently high level. Students' lessons are regularly based upon challenging and specific reading and writing tasks. Home learning and remote learning follows this same theme, with all subject material for English Language and Literature immediately accessible for students through Google Classroom and our A-Level Learning Platform. We aim to ensure pupils receive the best possible opportunity to build on their learning inside and outside the classroom, and therefore our department's homework strategy is based on recall, retrieving knowledge already visited, and wider research which enriches their experiences at Sixth Form. We also subscribe to degree-level resources made available to all students, such as MASSOLIT lectures which are delivered by lecturers from some of the top universities in the country. This allows all students the opportunity to challenge themselves to work beyond A Level and to aspire to courses in higher education with close links to English.

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| Implementation | Key Stage 5: Year 12 | <p>In Year 12, Language and Literature students begin by studying a range of non-fiction texts from the Edexcel Voices Anthology, developing their analysis of both pre-studied and unseen texts from a variety of genres. As an introductory aspect of the course, this focus forms direct links to skills students are already somewhat familiar with from GCSE study, whilst establishing the greater depth and detail required at A Level. With their other Language and Literature teacher, students begin by studying American prose from the early twentieth century with F. Scott Fitzgerald’s <i>The Great Gatsby</i>, which provides an immediately engaging text filled with interesting social and cultural issues.</p> <p>In the Spring term, students build upon this literary study with a second drama text for comparison, William Shakespeare’s classic tragedy <i>Othello</i>. The multiple thematic and contextual similarities between these two texts, centred around the overarching theme of ‘society and the individual’, allows students to forge and develop skills of comparison alongside those of analysis. Meanwhile, students continue to study the Voices Anthology (there are twenty texts in total to study!), whilst developing and refining their skills of comparison, as well as starting to explore creative possibilities for their upcoming coursework.</p> <p>In the Summer term, students begin to research, plan and construct their coursework portfolio. Students are required to craft two creative pieces of writing using stimulus texts. We encourage freedom of choice of these two texts, though offer support and recommendations to support students through every step of the process. This coursework unit encourages a greater degree of freedom of creativity and self-evaluation (as students are also required to write a commentary on their own pieces), whilst also developing the skill of referencing and wider independent reading which is so crucial at university study. In this term, we also prepare students for their first Internal Progression Exam (IPE), in which they are assessed on the Voices Anthology and ‘Society and the Individual’ literary comparison units studied earlier in the year under regulated exam conditions. This allows students to gain an overview of their progress and attainment in their first year of study.</p> |
| | Key Stage 5: Year 13 | <p>In Year 13, students are confronted with new texts in the Autumn term, using the skills acquired during Year 12 to tackle both Tennessee Williams’ seminal play <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> and a variety on Unseen Non-Fiction texts. Students are assessed on these two challenging topics with their second set of Internal Progression Exams.</p> <p>In the Spring term, students submit their final coursework piece following staff support and feedback. In terms of new course content, the A Level Language and Literature course concludes at the start of the Spring term, meaning students can spend valuable time this term developing and refining their wider conceptual understanding of all studied texts, their academic writing and their exam resilience. In this period, the third and final set of Internal Progression Exams takes place, which assesses students on their areas of greatest need.</p> <p>Finally, in the short Summer term period before study leave and A-Level exams, we clarify any final areas in need of development and prepare students for their final assessments in two separate exams.</p> |

Students are regularly assessed through verbal questioning, formative and summative written assessment, and folder checks, to gauge their understanding and progress within each of the units they are taught in Key Stage 5.

Our assessments include:

- Regular in-class assessments which are teacher marked.
- Peer and self-assessment of lesson tasks.
- Half-termly folder checks to assess the quality of independent study and organisation
- IPE exams throughout Year 12 and 13.

One of the key ways we measure our success as an English department is through promotion of the subject at GCSE level, and the uptake of the subject at A-Level. English Language and Literature continues to prove a popular option for A Level study, likely due to the range of fiction and non-fiction text studied, as well as the opportunity for creative writing not offered in Literature. We currently have 58 students studying A Level English Language and Literature, and look to maintain this number in the coming years.

At Samuel Whitbread Academy, our success as an English department relies on the enthusiasm students have for our subject, the quality of our lessons and resources, and the expertise and passion of our A Level staff.