

English Literature

Pearson Edexcel A-level English Literature (9ET0)

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Introduction

English literature A-level is a fascinating course which aims to give students an understanding not only of important literary texts, but of the contexts in which they were produced. The range of genres and eras is far more extensive than at GCSE and students will be taught by teachers who have often selected texts based on their own interests and specialisms. The texts are diverse and the free choice of second text for a coursework piece allows students to demonstrate their wider reading and interests.

Subject Requirements

At least a Grade 7 in both English literature and English language are required, and candidates who achieve highly at A-level generally gain 8 and 9 grades at GCSE. While the A-level is focused on literature, the English language GCSE is often a good indicator of A-level success, and this grade is therefore also relevant.

Course Outline

Edexcel A-level in English literature is a two-year course, assessed on performance in three exams and a coursework essay of 2,500-3,000 words, which is worth 20% of the qualification. By the end of the course, students are working at an impressively sophisticated level, having developed their wider reading and their confidence in expressing their own views and arguments.

Component 1: Drama

Section A: Shakespeare (one essay question, incorporating ideas from wider critical reading)

Section B: Other drama (one essay question)

Component 2: Prose

One comparative essay question on two prose texts from a chosen theme (at least one of the texts must be pre-1900)

Component 3: Poetry

Section A: Post-2000 Specified Poetry (one comparative essay question on an unseen modern poem written post-2000 and one named poem from the studied contemporary text)

Section B: Specified Poetry Pre or Post-1900 (one essay question)

Component 4: Non-examination assessment (coursework)

One extended comparative essay referring to two texts

Higher Education and Careers

English makes an ideal part of an A-level portfolio for any university degree, providing skills that all universities and employers respect such as excellent communication (both verbal and written); independent research skills; and the ability to justify arguments and viewpoints with valid evidence. The referencing skills taught for the coursework element are also vital for any higher education studies and are advantageous to have before starting a university course.

English is a competitive and well-respected course at university level and English graduates go on to pursue careers in everything from law to the media and business. Indeed, the founder of the Graduate Entry Medicine Course at the University of Nottingham argues that English graduates often go on to make excellent doctors!

What should I study alongside English?

English literature requires similar skills to other humanities subjects such as history, religious studies, and politics, and studying English alongside one or more of these will aid with revision methods. It can be combined with contrasting subjects with equal success however and, as a highly respected subject, will always be viewed positively by universities.

Is there anything else I should consider?

The focus of this A-level is literature rather than language. There is no creative writing element, but students are strongly encouraged to continue to participate in this if it something they enjoy, and there are external competitions that run throughout the year that can be completed under the direction of the Department.