

GCSE English Language & GCSE English Literature



Examinations in 2017

Dates for your diary:

GCSE English Literature: 8 June 2017

Paper 1

GCSE English Language: 7 June 2017

Paper 1

What is in this booklet?

The GCSE exam period is a stressful time for all students—but we realise that it can be a testing time for parents too. We've written this guide to try to give you a clearer picture of what will be expected of the students in the forthcoming exams and suggest some ways you can support in their work. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with me (Mrs Muir) or their English teacher. Contact details are at the end of the booklet.

What qualifications are the students working towards?

The department follows the AQA GCSE English Language and AQA GCSE English Literature specifications. This is a new specification this year and there is no coursework component—all assessment is done in examinations at the end of Year 11.

A brief overview of the examinations:

GCSE English Language

Examination 100%

Unit 1 50% (1 hour 45 mins)

Unit 2 50% (1 hour 45 mins)

+

Spoken Language—a separate endorsement 0% weighting

GCSE English Literature

Examination 100%

Unit 1 50% (1 hour 45 mins)

Unit 2 50% (2 hours 15 mins)

What about tiers of entry and setting?

There are no longer any tiers of entry. All students can achieve the full range of grades in the exams.



How are the courses assessed?

There will be a new grading structure—9 to 1 (with 9 being the top grade) - in GCSE for those students sitting their exams in 2017.

Below is an explanation from Ofqual of the assessment structure.

Key points

- Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above.
- Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve an A and above.
- For each exam, the top roughly 20 per cent of those who get grade 7 or above will get a grade 9—the very highest performers.
- The bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.
- Grade 5 will be positioned in the top third of the marks for a current grade C and bottom third of the marks for a current grade B. This will mean it will be of greater demand than the present grade C, and broadly in line with what the best available evidence tells us is the average PISE performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

www.gov.uk/government/news/setting-standards-for-new-GCSE-in-2017

What support does the Academy give to the students?

The first port of call for a student, if they are stuck, should be their teacher who will know exactly what they need to do in order to improve.

There are also drop-in sessions on various days during the week for all students—they need to register with Mrs Muir and will be told where to go.



What are the Examinations about?

- **The GCSE English Language exams** Examination 100%
 - Unit 1 50% (1 hour 45 mins)
Reading—comprehension based on one fiction text
Writing—descriptive or narrative piece
 - Unit 2 50 % (1 hour 45 mins)
Reading—comprehension based on two non-fiction texts
Writing—presenting a viewpoint/functional writing such as a letter, speech etc
 - Spoken Language
This is one individual presentation which does not go towards their GCSE qualification but is a separate endorsement with a 0% weighting. (They should have already completed this.)
- **The GCSE English Literature exams** Examination 100%
 - Unit 1 50% (1 hour 45 mins)
Shakespeare & The 19th Century Novel
Texts studied:
'Romeo and Juliet' by Shakespeare
'A Christmas Carol' by Dickens
 - Unit 2 50% (2 hours 15 mins)
Modern Texts and Poetry
Texts studied:
'An Inspector Calls' by Priestley
AQA Anthology—Power & Conflict Cluster
Unseen Poetry



How you can help your son/daughter prepare for the Language exams

- As both the Language exams test students' reading skills, it's a good idea for students to get into the habit of reading regularly—novels, short stories, newspapers, magazines, leaflets etc.

When reading non-fiction, students should be practising:

- Considering how writers create impressions/images
- Analysing persuasive techniques
- Comparing texts on similar topics
- Evaluating the effectiveness of texts

Encourage your son/daughter to talk about what they're reading.

- The students will have to write a creative piece of writing for Paper 1. This could be a descriptive or narrative piece. *Choose a photograph of a scene (lots available on-line) and ask them to write a detailed description of it. Or they could write a story based on what is in the picture.*
- *Encourage your son/daughter to practise their functional writing skills in preparation for Paper 2.* They should be familiar with how to write letters, reports, speeches, leaflets and articles. By reading plenty of these in advance of their exam, they'll stand a better chance of getting it right on the day.

Quick things to do

1. Using a recent newspaper article or one from a news website (i.e. bbc.co.uk) get them to highlight the main points. This can be done with whatever comes through the door—junk mail is really good for this too.
2. Get them to pick out a key phrase from the article and explain to you why they have chosen it—ensure they say more than “because it's good”.
3. Ask them to tell you how they would set out, say, a letter—perhaps give them a letter that has been sent to you and see if they can judge what phrases are good.
4. Give them 30 minutes to write—one of the tasks—perhaps a description or an article. Check they have used the basics—paragraphs, sentences, an interesting range of words etc.

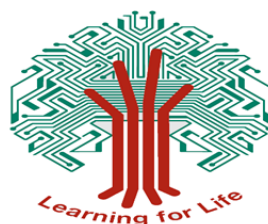


How can you help your son/daughter prepare for the Literature exams

- Students will benefit from having their own copies of the set texts. The English Department have given them their own versions so there are no excuses not to *read them again*. This is one of the main things to do. There are many film versions of the main texts that they could watch if they still need to revise the main bits of the story. These are useful *to a point* as the actual text is best.
- *Talk to your son/daughter about the texts they've studied*. In the exam, they'll be expected to write in detail about the following:
 - the storyline/structure, the characters, the themes, the social/historical context, the language techniques used.Students often find it beneficial to talk through their ideas.
- *Encourage your son/daughter to look at the GCSE revision resources on-line*. BBC's Bitesize revision website is quite a useful starting point but there are also many other revision sites available such as Sparks notes, Shmoop and universalteacher.org.uk. Surprisingly, You Tube has lots of useful revision videos and powerpoints—although they do come with a health warning—get them to choose wisely.
- *Help create flashcards of the storyline, characters, key quotations, and themes*—on paper or using an on-line app such as 'Get Revising'.

Quick things to do

1. Ask them to tell you the story of each text that they have studied and get them to jot down the main events. Ask them to write down the characters in each text and get them to tell you about each one.
2. Place 10 key quotations from each text on flash cards—on the back they can write down who said them and what themes they link with.
3. Using the flash cards, test them on the quotations—can they remember them off by heart? Can they tell you why that quotation is important?
4. With the Power & Conflict Anthology, spend 10 minutes planning their answer explaining the type of conflict shown in a poem of your choice and jotting down the quotations that they will use. This is really useful for them to get used to thinking on their feet and planning answers.



What resources have students been given?

Students should have all their notes from lessons in their exercise books

How can the exam board help?

AQA have useful resources and exemplar material to look at. You may find the following links useful.

www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/English/gcse/english-language-8700

www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/English/gcse/english-literature-8702

Contact details

If you have any questions about your son/daughter's English GCSEs or need to contact us about their progress please contact their English teacher or Mrs Muir (Head of English Department)

muirm.wp1@wellandparkacademy.com or 01858 464795

We hope that you have found this booklet useful & we thank you for your support.

