

English Literature

A Level

Head of department: Alex Fairbairn-Dixon

Email: anf@esher.ac.uk

Exam Board: OCR

Course Coordinators: Brenda Fitzgerald (AS),
Lydia Humby (A2)



What is the course about?

This course encourages knowledge and understanding of a range of literary texts including prose, poetry and drama. The texts illuminate one another and should enable groupings that show links or contrasts between them. In the course of the two-year programme, students will experience a wide range of reading, possibly including works by authors writing from 1300 up to the present day. Students will read widely and independently, they will engage creatively with texts, and will apply their knowledge of literary analysis and critical theories to the works studied.

At AS level:

In the first year, you will study two units. For the examination, which is 60% of the AS course, you will study Poetry from 1800 to 1945. You will focus on the poetry of one of the following; Robert Browning, Emily Dickinson, Edward Thomas or WB Yeats. There are several possibilities of prose, including *Frankenstein*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Secret Agent* or *Mrs Dalloway*. This exam is closed book, meaning no texts are allowed in the examination room. For Coursework, which is worth 40% of the AS, you will produce a folder of about 3000 words. You will write an essay on two texts which are linked by theme or genre. You will also do an essay demonstrating close reading skills on a separate text. Alternatively, you can do a piece of re-creative writing which explores a 'gap' or 'absence' in the text.

At A2 level:

In the second year, you will develop your literary and analytical skills further. You will show how texts relate to literary traditions and genres, how aspects of culture and context influence readers and writers and how interpretations of texts can change over time.

A2 comprises unit 3 and unit 4. In the first unit, which leads to the examination, you are likely to study Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In the examination, a statement or proposition will be presented, and you will respond to it in a critical and informed way. You will analyse structure, form and language and will consider other interpretations.

In the second part of this section, you will study one play and the work of one poet, both written before 1800, and you will be asked to explore contrasts, connections and comparisons between them. Currently the possibilities include Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*, Milton's *Paradise Lost Book Nine*, Marvell's *Selected Poems* and Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The choices in Drama include Jonson's *Volpone*, Webster's *The White Devil*, Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* or Sheridan's

The Rivals. Unit 4 is coursework, worth 20% of your A2 course. For this you write a comparative study of three texts from a range of periods and genres. The texts will be grouped so that connections can be made between them. You might write on satire, for example, or tragedy, or feminist perspectives, or travel writing. You will be given plenty of advice and guidance by your teacher.

How is the course assessed?

AS unit 1, examination, 60% of total AS marks. AS unit 2, coursework, 40% of total AS marks.
A2 unit 3, examination, 60% of total A2 marks. A2 unit 4 coursework, 40% of total A2 marks

What skills will I develop in this course?

You will develop the ability to engage with a range of texts from different writers and different times. You will develop the ability to read critically, to make connections between texts, and to write essays and responses that are informed by the reading you have done. You will focus on cultural, literary and linguistic contexts that arise from the study of different genres of writing.

What courses might combine with this subject?

English Literature is a highly valued subject and combines well with a wide range of other subjects. We feel it is unwise to combine it with English Language unless you are taking four full A levels, as it can be seen as limiting your range of academic experience.

What does this subject offer for higher education and future careers?

This subject is considered a challenging one in terms of university entrance. It attracts a lot of applicants for university as it combines the academic, creative and analytical skills which are so valued in many careers. The skills of analysis, interpretation and re-creation, as well as a knowledge of the cultural and literary contexts of novels, poems and plays are transferable to a range of disciplines and careers.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need to achieve at least a Grade C in both GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature.

What extra support / enrichment is on offer?

We have strong links with the Student Support department, which offers specific help when needed, perhaps with technical skills or planning essays or improving reading skills. Our Poetry Competition is a high point in the Autumn calendar, where a working poet reads her/his own work to students, and the winner of the poetry competition is announced. We have recently introduced a competition for writing in journalism, life writing and fiction. Waterstones come to the College twice a year and offer a lively interactive day recommending books and promoting them on site. We have run visits to the theatre, the cinema, the British Library, art galleries and various cultural events that are relevant to our students. As a department, we play an active role in supporting students who do the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in a topic related to English. We run a creative writing course as a complementary study during wider skills week. We have strong links with universities and other Sixth Form Colleges, and share our innovations and recommendations from our colleagues there.



ESHER
COLLEGE

Weston Green Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0JB
Tel: 020 8398 0291 Fax: 020 8339 0207
Email: eshercollege@esher.ac.uk

