

english literature

A Level

Head of department:
Rachel De Wachter and Anna Young

Email: englishhod@esher.ac.uk

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel



What is this subject about?

The study of English Literature is varied and always exciting. You will analyse eight works covering the period from 1300 to the present day. These may include an anthology of modern poetry; Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; Shelley's *Frankenstein* alongside Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*; Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*; and Geoffrey Chaucer's bawdy and brilliant *The Wife of Bath*. You will also learn how to respond to unseen poetry and to compare it to poetry you have studied, developing your analytical skills. These excitingly varied works will relate to each other, often in unexpected ways, enabling you to make interesting links and contrasts.

Importantly, students in this subject will be expected to read a great deal. Much of this will be carried out independently, and students should feel comfortable seeking out new texts for their own enjoyment, to enrich classwork and to practise using a range of strategies for reading.

What will I study over the two years?

Over the course of two years, you will study: modern poetry as well as some older poetry such as Chaucer's *Wife of Bath*; you will learn to compare the writing styles and themes of two novels such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro; you will study drama in the form of a play by Shakespeare such as *Hamlet* and a modern play such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams; finally you will study a specialist subject for the coursework in which you will compare two texts.

How is the course assessed?

Assessment is by three written exam papers (worth 80% of the final mark) and coursework (worth 20% of the final mark). The coursework is written in the second year.

What skills will I develop in this course?

By the end of the course English Literature students will have developed an impressive array of transferable skills including critical analysis, structuring arguments, the relevance of social and historical context, selecting evidence, debating and of course a thorough understanding of how language, structure and form contribute to the meaning of texts.

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

This subject is considered a competitive 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 are transferable to a range of disciplines and careers, including Publishing, Journalism and Law.

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 a minimum of:

- Grade 4 in GCSE English Literature
- Grade 4 in GCSE English Language

What extra support/enrichment is on offer?

We offer subject tutorials to students when required. We also have strong links with the Learning Support department, which offers specific help when needed, perhaps with technical skills, planning essays or improving reading skills. We run courses in Creative Writing as a complementary study and also at the end of the year during Wider Skills week. English Literature is well represented on our Enrichment programme of talks and seminars, and we have frequent visits to the theatre.

What courses might combine with this subject?

English Literature is a highly valued subject and combines well with a wide range of other subjects. It should only be combined with A Level English Language if you are 100% committed to studying English at University.

What is the difference between English Language and English Literature?

These subjects are radically different courses that involve practising very different skills. English Literature is about reading, analysing and evaluating poetry, drama and novels, looking at the ways that writers use techniques to create effects. English Language is the study of spoken and written language taken from everyday sources. It focuses on how values, attitudes and purposes are revealed through choices of language. This is very different from English Language at GCSE.