



## English Literature

The English Department is part of a Faculty structure that includes Drama and Psychology (PETs) and links are strong with these departments – particularly Drama: the first Enrichment Day of the academic year involves teaching and performing Shakespeare for primary school students and a range of dramatic and literary activities are run by the teachers of the three departments. Similarly, the final Enrichment Day of the school calendar involves learning and performing an abridged Shakespeare play in a day – this activity, organised by English and Drama teachers, is enjoyed by all of Year 12, and runs alongside a Year 8 inter-departmental trip to the Globe theatre in London. Two of the English staff also teach History, and the relationship between these departments is equally strong, with collaborative lectures frequently taking place at the Philosophy of History society meetings.

### Key Stage Three: content

The study of English at Key Stage Three covers three aspects: speaking & listening, reading, and writing. Girls develop skills in informal speech, such as group work or the creation and performance of dramatic monologues, and in more formal situations such as debate. They read and study a variety of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, which may involve looking at the language of tabloid newspapers, analysing and imitating the Detective or Suspense fiction genres or critically analysing a ballad, such as Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' and writing their own.

Students study a Shakespeare play in Year 8 and Year 9 to introduce them to the dramatist's work and to prepare them for further study at GCSE: the plays are taught in a variety of interesting ways, from drama activities to creative writing and critical assignments. In general, the writing tasks students undertake at Key Stage Three include personal and creative pieces, and also more formal writing such as comment, editorial, official letters, argument and persuasion. They also look at varieties of language use, both their own and those of others. They revise rules and conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

### Teaching and assessment

All of Key Stage Three are taught in groups of 30. Years 7 and 8 are taught in their form groups, whereas Year 9 classes are in mixed sets. Years 7 and 8 have six hours of English per fortnightly cycle; Year 9 have five. The Key Stage Three programme has been revised as part of a review of provision for this stage and a move away from National Curriculum levels, whilst still maintaining much of the course content of a traditional National Curriculum framework.

### Key Stage Four: GCSE English Literature

At GCSE, students are entered for AQA GCSE in English Literature and English Language. They are currently taught in groups of 24 and have six periods in Year 10. Both English Literature and English Language courses are linear – examinations are taken at the end of the two-year course. There is no coursework.

The texts taught for the Literature examination this year will be *An Inspector Calls*, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*/*Much Ado About Nothing*, Dickens' *Great Expectations* or *Pride and Prejudice* and the AQA poetry anthology (1789 to the present day, including Romantic poetry). The students



will also be preparing 'unseen' poetry and developing their analytical skills in this area throughout the course. They will be assessed using the new grading criteria of 1-9.

## Key Stage Five

In the Sixth Form, students currently have the choice of taking English at A Level or IB at Higher or Standard Level. **As of September 2016, the IB will no longer be offered, and the Department will be running a single A Level course.**

At A Level, students follow the AQA syllabus, 'Love through the Ages' in their first year. The texts taught for examination this year include *Othello*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Great Gatsby* and the AQA anthology of love poetry as part of the Love through the Ages module (pre-1900). Students are encouraged to read widely to develop their knowledge of the theme of love through the ages in different texts, whether prose, poetry or drama across time, and the Department provide a reading list to support this fantastic course. The 'unseen' element of the course requires students to develop their responses to unprepared poetry; skills they have been preparing since GCSE.

In their second year of the A Level, students prepare a Non Examination Assessment – their coursework, which is an independent piece of work supported through initial structured teaching. Students have the exciting opportunity to choose their own topic and two texts for comparison for a literary essay: the only requirement is that one of the texts is written pre-1900.

They also take the module, 'Texts in Shared Contexts', with an emphasis on Option 2b, 'Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to the present day.' This unit involves the comparison of some highly enjoyable and intriguing texts from different genres, including Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Carol Ann Duffy's *Feminine Gospels*. Once again, wider reading supplements this teaching and allows the students to enhance their understanding of how socio-political contexts can shape and filter into literary fiction.

IB students at Higher Level and Standard Level currently study a real variety of texts; choices include *Medea*, *Chronicle of A Death Foretold*, *The Outsider*, *Enduring Love*, *Hedda Gabler*, *A Doll's House*, *King Lear* and the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Hardy, reflecting the Department's specialist interests. The course itself is divided into four parts, and is a combination of oral presentations, written coursework and the examination. Girls complete a written coursework assignment based on their Part 1 study of texts in translation. They do an oral commentary and an individual oral presentation, both in school, on texts they have studied for Parts 2 and 4. In the final (closed book) examination, they write a literary commentary on a previously unseen passage of poetry or prose. They also write an essay on one of the literary genres (drama, poetry or prose) drawing upon their study of Part 3 texts.

## Extra-curricular

The English Department provide and oversee a wide variety of extra-curricular 'literary' activities, from debating, theatre visits, study days, creative writing societies and Slam Poetry clubs to the Sixth Form Close Reading group. For the past two years an annual lecture by a literary academic has been organised at the school on writers such as Shakespeare and Mary Shelley. Visiting lecturers also run workshops for Sixth Form students to develop their incipient or blossoming love of literature.