

English Language GCSE and English Literature GCSE **Exam Board: AQA**

A new English GCSE specification was introduced in September 2010: coursework was phased out, controlled assessment introduced to replace it and a number of new texts were introduced to the syllabus. There have also been significant changes made to the exam papers taken at the end of Year 11.

However, students will still study English Language and English Literature which are two separate GCSEs: it is possible to get different grades for each.
We also offer GCSE English only.

English Language

This is assessed by exam (40%) and controlled assessment (60%).

Exam:

- Understanding and producing non-fiction texts (taken at the end of Year 11)
Section A: students will answer up to 6 questions on three non-fiction texts
Section B: Students will write two non-fiction texts in a specified genre and for a given purpose

Controlled Assessment: Written pieces (40%)

- Extended Reading: understanding and responding to written texts (15%)
- Creative writing: two separate writing pieces (15% in total)
- Spoken Language Study (10%)

Controlled Assessment: Speaking and Listening (20%)

In class, and assessed by class teacher, this is on-going throughout Years 10 and 11. Speaking and Listening comprises presentations to the class; adopting a role in drama activities; and group and paired discussions and interaction.

English Literature

This is assessed by exam (75%) and controlled assessment (25%)

Exam:

There are two exams for English Literature, both taken at the end of Year 11:

- Unit 1 Exam (40%): Exploring modern texts: Anthology of short stories, 'Sunlight on the Grass'; The novel (Middle sets: 'Of Mice and Men;' Top sets: 'To Kill a Mockingbird')
- Unit 2 Exam (35%): Poetry Across Time: Anthology of Poetry, 'Moon on the Tides' and responding to an unseen poem.

Controlled Assessment: One Written Piece (25%)

- The significance of Shakespeare and the English Literary Heritage
Students study a Shakespeare play and are asked to make links between this and another text from the English Literary Heritage.

English

This is assessed by one exam (40%) and controlled assessment (60%).

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Exam:

Understanding and producing non-fiction texts (taken at the end of Year 11)

Section A: students will answer 4 questions on three non-fiction texts 20%

Section B: Students will write two non-fiction texts in a specified genre and for a given purpose 20%

Controlled Assessment Reading: Three written assessments on three texts 20%

- **Prose from a different culture:** 'Of Mice and Men' John Steinbeck
- **Literary Heritage:** Poetry
- **Drama:** 'Romeo and Juliet' William Shakespeare

Controlled Assessment Writing: Produce two Creative Texts (20%)

Controlled Assessment: Speaking and Listening (20%)

In class, and assessed by class teacher, this is on-going throughout Years 10 and 11. Speaking and Listening comprises presentations to the class; adopting a role in drama activities; and group and paired discussions and interaction.

Controlled Assessment Procedure

All controlled assessments are thoroughly prepared for during English lessons. The assessment itself is also conducted during lesson time, and in strict exam conditions. It is against exam regulations for work to be completed in unsupervised conditions, such as at home, and students risk failing their controlled assessment if they do not adhere to the rules set out by the exam board. The task is set by AQA, refined by your child's teacher, marked by the teacher, moderated by the English Department and possibly by external moderators, too. Unfortunately, it is not possible for students to re-take a controlled assessment, therefore it is essential that they work as hard as they can in lessons, engage fully with the texts studied, prepare thoroughly, ask questions if in need of further help and use all lesson time effectively.

Independent Study:

Visit the CLZ for a range of revision resources, advice and past papers for further exam practice

CPG offer an excellent range of study guides, as do York Notes.

You can usefully work from the following websites:

BBC Bitesize is quite good, especially on Of Mice and Men

www.englishbiz.co.uk is also good

BBC Skillswise is good for revising the basics, such as punctuation, sentence structures, cohesion and paragraphing

www.aqa.org.uk is worth a visit; English Language and English Literature (new)

REASONS A CANDIDATE MIGHT NOT GET THE BEST POSSIBLE GRADE

- Failing to complete one or more controlled assessment unit (not common, but it happens.)
- Not revising properly. (People say you can't revise for English. You can.)
- Misreading a question or text. (Underlining key words helps. Don't be afraid to make marks on a text; that includes exam papers themselves.)
- Forgetting the basics – capitals, paragraphing, etc. (Beware of too much speed in an English exam.)
- Being too tentative. (Be brave – show what you can do with words. Match your style to the task. Show you can use technical terms confidently.)
- Not varying sentences enough. Be alert to this.

You may be encouraged to know handwriting is not assessed. (The examiners need to be able to read an answer though!)

WAYS TO SUCCEED

- Excellent attendance will ensure you are fully prepared for all in-class controlled assessments. (Always see your English teacher immediately if you have been absent and catch-up on work missed)
- Take on board the regular detailed feedback you are given by your teacher and work hard to make progress towards meeting your skills targets
- Make really detailed notes on the poems, the short stories and on 'Of Mice and Men' and 'To Kill a Mockingbird' for revision.
- Read lots of varied texts to become familiar with different writing styles – magazines, newspapers, books ... even junk mail has a role (it's often persuasive text written with a definite purpose to influence a reader. What techniques have been used?)
- Identify key words in a question. Use them in an answer.
- Apply PEE technique (Point/Example/Explain).
- Plan paragraphing of a piece of writing (any writing – not just English work). Write it carefully. Check it over.
- Keep a spelling page in your planner and learn the ones that cause trouble.
- Read own work aloud to a sympathetic listener.
- Think long term. Language skills are for life, not just GCSE.
- Enjoy words. Appreciate their power.

Questions about specific areas of the course can be addressed to:

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