

### Curriculum Intent

The English Department at The Ecclesbourne School is committed to delivering a wide and varied experience of Literature covering novels, poetry and plays that offer a glimpse into the literary canon by studying texts that range from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century. Naturally reading lies at the core of the study of this subject but we believe that studying English Literature is much broader and varied than may first seem apparent. We believe that English Literature has the power to stimulate debate and discussion, offers students the chance to explore the contexts within which texts are written and explore a range of critical viewpoints and perspectives. Students have a wealth of opportunities to explore texts influenced by other literary works alongside texts that reflect social and political changes. The curriculum offers students the chance to look at individual texts in detail and draw comparisons between a range of texts as well as providing the opportunity to support their study of set texts with their own wider reading. Students will be taught and guided through the skills required to write essays that are analytical, evaluative and comparative. Studying English Literature facilitates the accumulation of cultural capital in a broad, accessible and meaningful way.

At A Level, students will have the opportunity to study three texts for coursework. Our choice of texts *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark and *The World's Wife* was guided by our commitment to offering a diet of texts that we believe students will enjoy, engage with and form strong, well-informed opinions on. *The History Boys* is a modern play (written in 2004) that revolves around approaches to education by examining the relationships amongst a group of boys and their teachers set in a school in the 1980s. As a 'coming of age' text it explores the experience of growing up and leaving school whilst at the same time dealing with loyalty and betrayal, sex and sexuality, attitudes towards authority, towards women and the role of education in society. As a drama text it is rich in interesting structural devices, literary and cultural references, and humour. Students compare this text with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* written in 1960 and set in the 1930s – a novel that shares many thematic similarities with *The History Boys* whilst also allowing students to explore the political and religious influences of the text. As a satirical exploration of the dangers of fascism the style of the novel allows students to understand and appreciate a particularly taut, spare and witty piece of writing. Both texts are highly accessible yet challenging and in drawing comparisons between the texts students are encouraged to think and reflect on their own views on education, morality and changes in society. In completing this piece of work at the start of the course students cover each of the assessment objectives therefore it serves as a clear introduction to the challenges of the A level assessment objectives.

*The World's Wife* is a collection of poetry that examines the complexities of gender relations and how men and women can be represented in a range of mediums. In particular, Duffy gives a voice to women who may have been overlooked or marginalised, through taking a female perspective on fictional, biblical, mythical, and historical characters and situations. The collection encompasses a range of poetic forms and the poems are characterised by Duffy's playful, mischievous style at the heart of which lies a fascination with the power of language. In choosing to focus on this collection we believe that students will benefit from the wealth of intertextuality evident in this work whilst at the same time exploring poems that tackle a range of issues that are relevant and pertinent today. In this piece of coursework students develop and demonstrate their skills in close reading and analysis, in addition to this the 1000-word limit encourages concise and precise writing.

The Shakespeare text that students study is either *Twelfth Night* or *The Tempest*. We chose to study *The Tempest* because it covers many interesting and pertinent themes about the nature of humanity as well as the current debate on post-colonial issues relating to slavery and white entitlement. It also explores the tensions between revenge and forgiveness, gender roles within relationships, and the power of education.

We chose to study *Twelfth Night* because it covers themes of deception, gender, identity and, of course, love. Like *The Tempest*, in *Twelfth Night* there are clear examples of slapstick humour juxtaposed with much more complex and lyrical scenes and intellectually challenging ideas. One important aspect of the Shakespeare unit is the exploration of different readings and interpretations over time and both *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* lend themselves to students accessing productions that are highly innovative, with varied ways of staging, and interpretations that range from the traditional to the more radical and unusual.

For the second part of the Drama and Poetry pre-1900 we chose *Paradise Lost books 9 and 10*, by John Milton and *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster. Both texts are superb examples of their genre. Milton's style opens many opportunities for the exploration of the epic form, of literary devices, rhythm and imagery, whilst the themes in the text cover the eternal struggle between good and evil. The machinations of Satan and his persuasive skills are deliberately reminiscent of politicians of Milton's time and bear striking resemblance to twenty first century proponents of fake news and 'alternative truth'. The stunning characterisation also makes comparisons with characters in *The Duchess of Malfi*, clear and sharp. Comparing a poetry text with a drama text can be problematic but these texts have characters and relationships which are clearly comparable. *The Duchess of Malfi* is another 17<sup>th</sup> century text, which again, makes the comparative element more easily accessible. The themes of good and evil and gender struggles, reflect those of the Milton text but the portrayal of corruption in government shows a fallen world that reflects aspects of life today. Indeed, a recent RSC production brought the play bang up to date and gave it a brilliant feminist interpretation.

In the Comparative and Contextual Study paper we chose to focus on the dystopian collection of texts. Dystopian novels can challenge readers to think differently about current social and political climates therefore we believe that as a genre it feels relevant to students of this age, as they are acquiring greater social and political awareness. Students are required to embark on a programme of wider reading to support their analysis of an unseen text from this genre therefore we were keen to choose a genre where there are numerous sub-genres eg. Speculative fiction, post-apocalyptic fiction and the more traditional science fiction to broaden the appeal to students. To further support students with their extra reading we work on a short 'extra' dystopian text *The Chrysalids* by John Wyndham. This serves the purpose of allowing us to model, in lessons, what students should look out for and make notes on when they start their own wider reading programme.

In choosing to study *1984* by George Orwell and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood we are very aware of how the later text was inspired by the earlier text, despite very distinct differences in written style, and how this therefore facilitates ease of comparison. Many argue that *1984* is the quintessential dystopian novel therefore we see it as lying firmly at the core of the genre which further supported our choice and decision. For a range of different reasons, and in a range of different places, both books have been banned which can prompt discussions on censorship and its role in society today and as such we feel this adds to the relevance of the texts to students. *The Handmaid's Tale* is rich in intertextuality alongside numerous

cultural, historical and biblical references so again this text allows for further development of cultural capital. With context as a dominant assessment objective we felt that the literary, social and historical context coupled with the relevance of both texts today influenced our choice of texts.

### **Curriculum Implementation:**

#### **Structure of the two-year course**

The course is split between two teachers. Teacher a has 3 lessons in Year 12 and 2 in Year 13, Teacher b has 2 in Year 12 and 3 in Year 13. Our rationale, for organising the course as it is, is to ensure that students have balance at any one time between the more challenging and the more accessible texts. The focus of the teaching of Shakespeare in the first instance is on close analysis of an extract this is returned to later in the year when students move on to looking at extracts from unseen dystopian texts and then in Year 13 with the Duffy coursework. Similarly, the comparative coursework is equally weighted across each of the five assessment objectives therefore this serves as a useful introduction at the start of the course to the AOs that students would not be familiar with from GCSE (AO4 and AO5). The most challenging texts (The Duchess of Malfi and Paradise Lost) are taught in Year 13 and in the interest of balance on the other side of course students work on the Duffy coursework and arguably the more accessible dystopian text, The Handmaid's Tale.

#### **How the course is assessed**

##### Assessment Objectives:

AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

##### Structure of Assessment

Component 01 Shakespeare Drama and poetry pre-1900 Drama and poetry pre-1900 (01)\* Written paper 60 marks Closed text 2 hours 30 minutes 40%

Component 02 • Close reading in chosen topic area • Comparative and contextual study from chosen topic area Comparative and contextual study (02)\*  
Written paper 60 marks Closed text 2 hours 30 minutes 40%

Component 03 • Close reading OR re-creative writing piece with commentary. • Comparative essay\* Literature post-1900 (03)\* 40 marks Non-exam assessment 20%

Students start practising exam technique from early in the course (late September of Year 12) and can see their progress build up through use of assessment books where they complete exam practice essays separate from their notes.

Year 12				
3xlessons			2xlessons	
Sept- Feb half term	Shakespeare	Students work on either The Tempest or Twelfth Night. In the first instance students focus on the extract question/close analysis. As students complete their study of the play they move on to the whole text question which requires an evaluative response and where they consider changing views of the play over time and critical viewpoints. <b>Building on prior learning: Students study a slimmed down version of A Midsummer Night's Dream in Year 7 with a focus on the conventions of a Shakespearean comedy, the full text of Macbeth in Year 9 and Romeo and Juliet in Year 10. The focus in the Year 9 is language analysis and developing a fuller understanding of the techniques used – something that is built on in Year 10.</b>	Spark/Bennett comparative coursework	Students start with The History Boys and focus on an understanding of characters, themes, context, dramatic effectiveness. As they work on this they build up their confidence with understanding critical viewpoints and the non-linear structure of the play. As students work on The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie focus on drawing comparisons between the two texts. <b>Building on prior learning: Students study a modern play in Year 9 with a focus on dramatic devices, structure of the play, and development of character. In addition to this exploring context to develop understanding of a text is evident in the study of a novel in each year of KS3 and in the study of Shakespeare, Animal Farm and The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in Year 10.</b>
After Feb half term - end of summer term	1984 Shakespeare revision For Year 12 exam	Students focus on the key themes and ideas in this text alongside developing an understanding of the typical features of dystopian novels. In addition to that they work on the social, historical and literary	Critical appreciation Short additional dystopian text	Students develop their skills in approaching an unseen text from a known genre. Having worked on compiling comprehensive lists of features found in dystopian fiction as they have been working on 1984 they are able to

		<p>context of this text. In working on this text alongside <i>The Chrysalids</i> it helps students to make connections within the genre and identify common features. In addition to this, students are able to revise and revisit the Shakespeare text in preparation for mock examinations.</p> <p><b>Building on prior learning: In Year 11 students study <i>Animal Farm</i> which is useful preparation for their study of Orwell – in particular his sparse style of writing, his reasons for writing and through their understanding of totalitarian regimes.</b></p>	<p>(to model note-taking/way to conduct own additional reading for dystopian critical appreciation) Year 12 exam Q1 Dystopian paper</p>	<p>add to this with examples from <i>The Chrysalids</i> along with other extract from dystopian novels. Students are able to transfer this knowledge to their own reading and make links between the unseen extracts and their own reading.</p> <p><b>Building on prior learning: Students are familiar with tackling unseen texts from work on <i>Of Mice and Men</i> in Year 9 and in their work on GCSE English Language in Year 11. In addition to this in students work on comparing texts they have prior knowledge of with unseen texts in both Years 10 and 11 in their study of poetry and <i>Animal Farm</i>.</b></p>
<p>Summer holiday</p>	<p>Dystopian independent reading</p>			

Year 13				
Sept-Oct half term	Short coursework (Duffy)	<p>Students study a selection of poems from this collection encompassing the range of poetic forms, from the perspective of a wide range of historical, fictional, mythical and biblical figures. The coursework has a 1000 word limit so students have to write in a detailed yet concise way, drafting and editing are key skills utilised.</p> <p>Building on prior learning: Skills of analysis have already been practised in both the critical appreciation and Shakespeare parts of the course in Year 12. Students have studied a range of poetry in each year of KS3 and at GCSE in the conflict poetry cluster.</p>	Milton & Malfi	<p>Students work on The Duchess of Malfi initially to establish the key themes and concepts, of good and evil, gender roles, power and corruption, that they can then refer back to when studying Paradise Lost. Students build and develop their knowledge of social, historical and literary context through the comparisons made between these two texts.</p> <p>Building on prior learning: Students have studied extracts from Gothic fiction in Year 8 and then more fully in Year 10 when studying The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde – a text at the core of which lies the nature of good and evil.</p>
Nov- Easter	Handmaid's Tale and comparative question	<p>Having studied 1984 in Year 12 alongside the wider reading and analysis of unseen dystopian extracts students then work on The Handmaid's Tale. Developing on their understanding of dystopian fiction students consider the novel as satire, as speculative fiction and contextually as a reaction to the growing far-right in the US in the 1980s and as a reaction to second-wave feminism.</p> <p>Building on prior learning: Students have looked at narrative perspective in each year of KS3 and have examined the concept of totalitarian regimes in KS4 through studying Animal Farm.</p>		

		Gender and feminist perspectives have been examined in their study of Duffy and in their work on Shakespeare in Year 12.		
Easter term	Dystopia (comparison) and Shakespeare revision		Milton and Malfi revision and dystopia (critical appreciation) revision	

**Enrichment & developing understanding of Literature**

**Additional reading:**

Alan Bennett – Talking Heads, The Habit of Art, The Lady in the Van

Muriel Spark – The Girls of Slender Means, Memento Mori, The Driver’s Seat, A Far Cry from Kensington

Carol Ann Duffy – Feminine Gospels, The Bees

George Orwell – Why I Write

Margaret Atwood – Cat’s Eye, Alias Grace, The Blind Assassin

**Dystopian fiction (supporting the approach to the critical appreciation question)**

Never Let Me Go Kazuo Ishiguro

The Children of Men P D James

The Power Naomi Alderman

Brave New World Aldous Huxley

The Time Machine HG Wells

Fahrenheit 451 Ray Bradbury

Oryx and Crake Margaret Atwood

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Philip K Dick