

General introduction

Welcome to your English Literature GCSE course! This introduction will serve as a guide to what you can expect from the course, and it will show you how to plan your study of this course effectively. So do not just jump straight on to Lesson 1!

You and GCSE English Literature

Your GCSE English Literature course gives you the opportunity to explore your literary interests and encourages you to develop:

1. the ability to read, understand and respond to a wide range of literary texts, to appreciate the ways in which authors achieve their effects and to develop the skills necessary for literary study.
2. an awareness of personal, social, historical and cultural contexts and influences in the study of literature.
3. the ability to construct and convey meaning in speech and writing, matching style to audience and purpose.

You will need to show that you can:

1. respond to texts critically, sensitively and in detail, selecting appropriate ways to convey your response, using textual material as appropriate.
2. explore how language, structure and forms contribute to the meanings of texts, considering different approaches to texts and alternative interpretations.
3. explore relationships and comparisons between texts, selecting and evaluating relevant material.
4. relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literary traditions.

Do not worry if this all seems a bit daunting at the moment. The OOL course is designed to help you to achieve these aims, and by the end of the course they should come as second nature!

Texts to be studied

There are two major elements to the AQA English Literature GCSE: examinations and coursework. The examination is worth 70% of the total marks, and the coursework 30%. (You will find further details about the AQA specification (syllabus) at the end of the General Introduction.)

You are required to study a total of six texts, three for the examination and three for coursework. These texts need to include prose, poetry and drama, and need to include works written both before and after 1914.

We have selected six texts which match these criteria to study on this course. They are as follows:

Examination texts:

Prose: Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Drama: William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

Poetry: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The General Prologue*

Coursework texts:

Prose: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Drama: Willy Russell, *Educating Rita*

Poetry: *Up The Line To Death: The War Poets 1914-1918*

You will need to get hold of your own copy of all of these books. The modules on each text suggest which editions of the texts you should try to get hold of. One easy way of buying textbooks is through Oxford Open Learning's website (www.ool.co.uk). You can take texts into the examination.

Important Note: New annotation rules are being brought in for 2004 and 2005. In 2005 no-one will be allowed to take into any English Literature Exam any text in which notes have been made (this includes underlining). For the 2004 examination, you are allowed to make **brief** notes in your copy of the text. This means that you can make short notes in the margin, and use underlining and highlighting. You cannot write notes in continuous prose, copy out model answers, or add any additional material to the book (including Post-it notes). In 2005 you may have to purchase a particular edition of your texts, as specified by the exam board. These new rules aim to make examinations fairer as all candidates will have exactly the same materials to work from. Any candidate disobeying the rules may be disqualified from the examination.

Apart from the literary texts, there is no need to buy any other textbooks. However, although the OOL course is self-contained, it is always a good idea to look at alternative approaches or to gain extra practice. Your local or college library may contain some helpful books.

The Course

The Oxford Open Learning English Literature GCSE course is divided into eight modules and 27 lessons in all. It is set out as follows:

Module One: Literary Analysis

Lesson One: Writing about Yourself
Lesson Two: Comparing Different Versions of an Event

Tutor-marked Assignment A

Lesson Three: Imagery and Setting
Lesson Four: Character
Lesson Five: Point of View

Tutor-marked Assignment B

Module Two: Essay Technique

Lesson Six: Persuasion
Lesson Seven: Paragraphing
Lesson Eight: Planning Essays

Tutor-marked Assignment C

Lesson Nine: Argument

Module Three: Hardy: *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Lesson Ten: Characters and Characterisation
Lesson Eleven: Setting and Themes

Tutor-marked Assignment D

Lesson Twelve: Structure and Plot
Lesson Thirteen: Style and Viewpoint

Tutor-marked Assignment E

Module Four: Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*

Lesson Fourteen: Studying Shakespeare
Lesson Fifteen: Acts I and II
Lesson Sixteen: Acts III, IV and V

Tutor-marked Assignment F

Lesson Seventeen: Characters and Themes

Tutor-marked Assignment G

Module Five: Chaucer: *The General Prologue*

Lesson Eighteen: Understanding the *Prologue*

Lesson Nineteen: Chaucer's Characters

Tutor-marked Assignment H

Lesson Twenty: Chaucer's Criticism of Society

Lesson 21: Summary and Conclusion

Tutor-marked Assignment I

Module Six: Willy Russell: *Educating Rita*

Lesson 22: Background and Characters

Lesson 23: Structure and Language

Module Seven: *Up The Line To Death: The War Poets 1914 - 1918*

Lesson 24: War Poetry: Introduction and Background

Lesson 25: War Poetry: Poets and Themes

Module Eight: Alice Walker: *The Color Purple*

Lesson 26: Characters

Lesson 27: Themes, Structure and Language

Revision

Glossary

The course is arranged in this way in order to make it easy to follow. The first two modules are general, introductory modules, designed to ease you gently into the course and to provide you with a solid foundation on which to base your textual studies. Modules Three, Four and Five are on the three examination texts, and each of these contain two tutor-marked assignments which should help you to check your progress. The final three modules are on the three coursework texts, and contain suggestions for pieces of coursework.

You do not have to follow the course in this order. Indeed, you may find it useful to tackle one or two of the coursework modules earlier, so that you can get some of your coursework out of the way. Whatever route you choose to take through the course, you will undoubtedly need to revise the examination modules just before you sit the exam, in order to refresh your memory.

The Structure within each Lesson: How to Study

Front Page

The front page of each lesson shows:

- The title.
- Aim(s) for the lesson. These set out the position that you should reach after working through the lesson; keep these in mind while reading the lesson material.
- Context. This gives a very brief summary and shows how the lesson fits in with the rest of the course.
- Note. This indicates specific reading or writing materials needed for the lesson.

Lesson Notes

There then follow the notes; these present the subject material to be studied in the lesson. Read these through carefully several times until you feel that you have understood the broad outline of the theory involved, and then tackle any reading references.

Activities

For most of this course the work that you will be doing will not be sent to your tutor; it will consist of Activities; these will aid your learning and allow you to check that you are taking in what you have been reading. The important thing to remember is that none of the work that you do in these activities is wasted: all of it will contribute to helping you develop skills, which will later be assessed both in your coursework assignments and in your examination. Your activities will give you necessary practice, and careful work on these will contribute more to your eventual performance and success than any other aspect of the course.

Activities are indicated as follows over the page:

Activity 7

Is the main speaker in this passage a detached, objective narrator of events?

In your answer, you should consider whether this speaker:

- Presents opinion as if it were fact
- Keeps his or her own opinions of people out of the account
- Could have witnessed everything that s/he tells
- Assumes that the listener will agree with his/her views
- Is more sympathetic to some of the people involved than to others.

Decide in what ways this teller is biased, and give examples from the passage. You may also use your knowledge of the first passage in your answer.



The pencil symbol indicates that you should make your own notes in the space provided (though, of course, you may prefer to make them separately).

Where Do I Find the Answers to Activities?

This varies. Some Activities do not have answers at all because they are too open-ended and their purpose is that you should produce a response which is personal to you.

However, most Activities do have 'specimen' answers. These are not the *only* 'correct' answers but they may help you to see how you could improve your own work. Some of these specimen answers are to be found at the end of the lesson and some immediately following the activity.

You may be tempted to peek at the answer to the activity before you have made a proper attempt at it. This is to be avoided at all costs. You must discipline yourself *not* to read the next section of a lesson until you have done the activity. To help you manage this we have put the activities in boxes. Think of these boxes as red lights; do not approach them until you are ready to give the activity your best shot, and do not pass them until you have completed the activity.

Reading the answers too early will be fatal for a number of reasons. The specimen answer tackles the problem in a certain way, and if you have not made your own attempt yet, you will tend to think that that is the only way to do it. There will be other ways, and it is best if you can find one of your own. Remember that the answer is just a 'specimen' or 'suggested' answer.

Self-Assessment Tests

When you feel that you have mastered the topics and completed the activities, tackle the Self-Assessment Test (there is one at the end of most lessons). The answers to these can be found at the end of each module. Again, do not be tempted to cheat by looking at the answers. This would give you less chance of doing well on the Tutor-marked Assignments and on the coursework.

Tutor-marked Assignments

After every two or three lessons there is a Tutor-marked Assignment. These should be carried out under timed conditions to give you examination practice. These tests will thoroughly check your understanding of the previous few topics. You should send your answers to these tests to your tutor, who will return your marked script together with a set of suggested answers.

You will not find Tutor-marked Assignments in Modules Six to Eight, as these relate to your coursework.

You and Your Tutor

You should note that you must write your name and other details very clearly on your test answers, and that you should ensure that all the sheets of your assignment are firmly attached together. To these you should attach one of the TMA cover slips which are supplied with this course, taking care to fill in the relevant sections (note that some of these will be filled in by your tutor).

When your scripts for the Tutor-marked Assignments are returned, suggested answers will also be sent to you.

The AQA Syllabus 3711 for 2004 onwards

This course of lessons will prepare you for either the internal or the external candidate's version of the English Literature GCSE (Key Stage 4) syllabus B (3711) examined by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) in 2004.

The External Syllabus

An external candidate is someone who is either (a) not enrolled at a school or college, or (b) if they *are* enrolled at a college, they are taking the written examination at a different centre.

External candidates have their coursework marked directly by the board (not their tutor). The coursework of internal candidates is marked by their tutor. But the syllabus content is the same for both.

At some point in your study, it is advisable to check the syllabus for details of what will be required of you in your examination; you will naturally find that all lessons in this course are relevant to your examination needs. However, the AQA syllabus does contain a great deal of information on the aims and assessment of the English Literature course, and also includes suggestions for coursework assignments.

It is a very good idea to get hold of your own copy of the syllabus for the year in which you expect to take the examination. Copies are available from AQA at the following address:

Publications Department
AQA, Aldon House
39 Heald Grove
Rusholme
Manchester
M14 4NA
Tel: 0161-953-1170

Copies can also be downloaded from the AQA website: www.aqa.org.uk. Make sure you get the right year and the correct syllabus!

Tiers of Assessment

There are two 'tiers' of assessment and eventually you must opt for one, as far as your choice of examination paper is concerned. Tier F is 'Foundation' and Tier H is 'Higher'. This course assumes that you will be aiming for the top grades and will therefore be taking the Higher Written Examination.

The AQA Examination

There are two components in the examination: coursework (which counts for 30%) and the written examination (70%).

The written examination lasts for two hours, with an additional 15 minutes reading time at the beginning. You can take copies of the set texts into the examination room. In 2004 these texts may contain your own marginal notes, but not prepared answers or copies of parts of professional commentaries. In 2005 they may not contain any notes or annotations at all. You must answer three questions, one on each text, and you will be given a choice of two questions on each text. In the Higher Tier paper, one question on each text may require you to analyse a particular section of the text. The poetry-based questions may also require you to be able to compare different poems/parts of poems.

Coursework

All candidates for this syllabus have to submit a folder of coursework. It may be that your tutor is required to mark your coursework, i.e. you are an internal candidate. You should discuss this with him or her. You would need to be in face-to-face contact with your tutor and you would need to be linked to a recognised examination centre. This course does not assume that you are in this position, rather that your coursework will be marked by AQA. External candidates will need to find out what the closing date for submission of their coursework file is so that they can plan their programme of study, etc., to meet this deadline.

The rules for coursework are more flexible than those for the exam, but you still need to follow a certain set of criteria. You need to submit three pieces of coursework, one on each of the coursework texts studied on this course. There is no minimum or maximum word limit either for individual pieces or for the whole folder. To give you some idea of the length you should be aiming for, however, the minimum length for the whole folder has in previous years been at least 1500 words.

Your three pieces of coursework must demonstrate the following abilities:

1. One piece must demonstrate an understanding of literary tradition.
2. A different piece must demonstrate an appreciation of social and historical influences and cultural contexts.
3. One of the three pieces must explore relationships and comparisons between texts.

In this course we have structured the coursework around these criteria in the following way. The suggestions for coursework on *Educating Rita* will concentrate on the social and cultural issues of the play; the piece on the poems of World War I will enable you to demonstrate your understanding of literary tradition, and will also explore relationships and comparisons between texts; and you will be able to follow a number of different paths in your work on *The Color Purple*.

At least one of your coursework pieces must be hand-written. The Activities undertaken during the coursework modules may also form the basis of coursework but you must be careful that the suggested answers and commentaries given in this course do not contribute too much to the piece of work that you produce.

There is a certain amount of paperwork involved in the submission of coursework. Your tutor will be able to help you with this nearer the time.

Linking Coursework in English Literature with Coursework in English

There are a number of connections between the English Literature and English syllabuses set by AQA. Many of the same skills are tested by both syllabuses, and for that reason some of the material in this course is also to be found in the OOL English GCSE course. If you have already studied that course, there is no need to cover the same ground twice so you should skip over any material in the introductory modules which seems to be over-familiar.

If a piece of coursework is relevant to both syllabuses, it can be submitted for assessment for both. The main English syllabus includes a literature element with a free choice of texts, so much of the coursework that you produce for this course would also be relevant for that.

Indeed, if you successfully work through this course, you would be well placed to take the AQA English examination at the same time (syllabus 3701/3703 Mature). If you are interested, you will need to discuss this possibility with your tutor.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses. Put it on your Favourites list now!

And finally...

Good Luck!

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