

English
Literature
A-level

Introduction

Welcome to your A-level English Literature course.

The Specification (or Syllabus)

This course has been designed to give you a full and thorough preparation for the AS level or A-level English Literature A 7710 specification, set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). This specification includes coursework at A-level but not if you take the AS level only.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the AS only award is **7711**.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the A-level award is **7712**.

Coursework (NEA)

Please be aware that the A-level examination includes **coursework** (also called non-exam assessment or NEA). The current arrangements are that the coursework will be supervised and marked by Oxford Open Learning.



Oxford Open Learning

Arrangement of Lessons

Module One: Literary Analysis

Lesson 1	Imagery
Lesson 2	The Sounds of Language
	Tutor-marked Assignment A
Lesson 3	Characters
Lesson 4	Descriptive Writing
	Tutor-marked Assignment B
Lesson 5	Point of View
Lesson 6	Tone of Voice
Lesson 7	Feelings
	Tutor-marked Assignment C

AS Modules

Module Two: Anthology of Love Poetry through the Ages: Pre-1900

Lesson 8	Three Poems dependent on Images
Lesson 9	Problematic Partners
Lesson 10	Hearts' Desires
Lesson 11	Brief Encounters
Lesson 12	The Garden of Love
	Tutor-marked Assignment D

Module Three: Love through the Ages

Lesson 13	Module Introduction
Lesson 14	The Middle Ages and the Invention of Love
Lesson 15	Chaucer on Love
Lesson 16	Shakespeare on Love
Lesson 17	The Sonnet
Lesson 18	John Donne and the Metaphysicals
Lesson 19	Wordsworth's Natural Love
	Tutor-marked Assignment E
Lesson 20	John Keats: a Romantic on Love
Lesson 21	The Rise of the Novel
Lesson 22	From Jane Austen to Mills & Boon
Lesson 23	Twentieth-Century Poetry and Song
	Tutor-marked Assignment F

Module Four: Shakespeare: *Othello*

Lesson 24	Shakespeare: Historical and Social Background
Lesson 25	Introduction to <i>Othello</i>
Lesson 26	Character, Language and Style in <i>Othello</i>
Lesson 27	Form and Structure in <i>Othello</i>
	Tutor-Marked Assignment G

Module Five: Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

Lesson 28	<i>Jane Eyre</i> in Context
Lesson 29	Jane and Rochester
Lesson 30	<i>Jane Eyre</i> and Romances
Lesson 31	Comparisons with <i>Jane Eyre</i>
	Tutor-marked Assignment H

Module Five: (b) Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (AS only)

Lesson 32	Introduction to <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i>
Lesson 33	Hardy's Characterisation
Lesson 34	Language and Style in <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i>
	Tutor-Marked Assignment I

Tutor-Marked Assignment J (Mock Exam)

2nd Year Modules

Module Six: Owen Sheers: *Skirrid Hill*

Lesson 35	Sheers' Life and Work in Context
Lesson 36	'Last Act' to 'Intermission'
	Tutor-Marked Assignment K
Lesson 37	'Y Gaer' to 'The Wake'
Lesson 38	'Skirrid Fawr' and Themes and Techniques
	Tutor-marked Assignment L

Module Seven: Michael Frayn: *Spies*

Lesson 39	<i>Spies</i> : Overview
Lesson 40	<i>Spies</i> : Chapters 1-2
Lesson 41	<i>Spies</i> : Chapters 3-6
	Tutor-marked Assignment M
Lesson 42	<i>Spies</i> : Chapters 7-11
Lesson 43	<i>Spies</i> : Themes and Characters
	Tutor-marked Assignment N

Module Eight: Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Lesson 44	Williams and American Drama; Scenes 1-3
Lesson 45	Scenes 4-7
	Tutor-marked Assignment O
Lesson 46	Scenes 8-11
Lesson 47	Themes and Comparisons
	Tutor-marked Assignment P

Coursework (non-exam assessment)

Module Nine: Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park* and Coursework

Lesson 48	The Themes of <i>Mansfield Park</i>
Lesson 49	Narrative Technique and the Minor Characters
Lesson 50	The Major Characters
	Tutor-marked Assignment Q
Lesson 51	Comparing <i>Mansfield Park</i> to a Second Text
	Tutor-marked Assignment R

Tutor-Marked Assignment S (Mock Exam)

Texts Required for this Course

Please note that, in most cases, it is not vital that you have the precise edition of the text given here. In some cases, it may help in terms of page references, but there are rarely major differences between editions of any of the texts.

Module 1 Introductory Module – relevant for all papers
'Literary Analysis'; no set texts: covers a wide range of unseen literary material

Module 2 Anthology of Love Poetry through the Ages: Pre-1900 – AS Paper 1, A-level Paper 1

As this may be difficult to obtain from AQA, we have created our own copy and placed it at the end of Module 2.

Module 3 Love through the Ages – AS Paper 2, A-level Paper 1

A number of texts are required for relatively brief periods of study. Advice on suitable editions is given and the student should aim to buy, borrow or access on the internet all the texts mentioned here.

Module 4 (Shakespeare)– AS Paper 1, A-level Paper 1

Othello (Arden [Thomson] edition; ISBN: 978-1903436455)

Module 5 – AS Paper 2, A-level Paper 1

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre* (Penguin Classics, ISBN: 0141441143)
and (only if you are doing the AS level examination!):

Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Wordsworth Ed, ISBN: 978-1853260056)

2nd Year:

Module Six – A-level Paper 2, Section A

Owen Sheers: *Skirrid Hill* (Seren, ISBN: 978-1854114037)

Module Seven – A-level Paper 2, Section B

Michael Frayn: *Spies* (Faber & Faber, ISBN: 978-0571268856)

Module Eight – A-level Paper 2, Section B

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Penguin, ISBN: 978-0141190273) (for comparison with *Spies*)

Module Nine (Coursework) – A-level “non-exam” component

There is considerable choice for coursework so there is no obligation to buy coursework texts at the outset. This is the text for which there is coverage in the main course:

Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park* (Wordsworth Ed, ISBN: 978-1853260322)

Possible editions of the four suggested ‘comparison’ texts are as follows:

George Orwell: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Penguin, ISBN: 978-0141393049)

Arthur Miller: *Death of a Salesman* (Methuen, ISBN: 978-1408108413)

Chaucer: *The Miller’s Tale* (CUP, ISBN: 978-0521701440)

Shakespeare: *Much Ado about Nothing* (Wordsworth Ed, ISBN: 978-1853262548)

The last two of these and other pre-twentieth century texts are also freely available on the internet, e.g. via the Gutenberg Project (www.gutenberg.org). The more books you read, the better your chances of doing well!

One easy way of acquiring accompanying textbooks is through the OOL website (www.ool.co.uk).

Further Reading

Do not be deceived into thinking that you will do well in ‘A’ level English Literature simply by studying the set books. As with all ‘A’ levels, it is important to read around the subject. The assessment objectives of your course (below) specifically require that you compare the responses of different readers, and that you show some understanding of the historical and cultural background of your texts. Each module will give you suggestions for supporting reading which is appropriate to the study of that particular set book. Your tutor may also be able to advise you on supplementary reading.

The only books you will *have* to buy are the set texts themselves; the purchase of supplementary reading books is optional. Your local library should be able to help you get hold of the supplementary texts.

Your ability to write English well is particularly important as far as the examiners are concerned. It may be that you need an extra course on essay-writing skills. Alternatively, there are a number of good textbooks which would help you with this. Any good library or bookshop should be able to help you to find an appropriate book, should you require one.

Aims and Objectives of the Course

This course has been designed and written with the purpose of preparing you to sit and *pass* the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) or the Advanced Level (A-level) English Literature Examination of the AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance). These specifications, based on the Subject Core for English Literature, are designed to encourage candidates to develop interest and enjoyment in literary study, through reading widely and critically.

The AS provides a platform from which candidates may move to deepen and widen their studies at A-level. The 2nd year course builds on the foundation offered by AS studies. The specification encourages students of English Literature to develop as autonomous critics of literary texts by reading across centuries, styles of writing, genres and gender, and, at A2, through contact with an extensive range of views about texts and how to read them.

Wider reading should encompass the great traditions of English Literature as well as the new. It may include literature in English from outside the United Kingdom as well as literature in translation, non-fiction as well as fiction.

Assessment Objectives (AOs)

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all A-level English Literature specifications and all exam boards. See Section 4.2 of the A-level specification.

The exams and non-exam assessment will measure to what extent students have achieved the following AOs:

- 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.

The AOs do *not* apply equally over all the elements of assessment. It helps to be clear on which AOs you are trying to demonstrate at different points! Nonetheless, *all* the AOs are required (to some degree) on *all* the papers. So a simple plan would be to ensure that you try to demonstrate each of the AOs in each piece of work and gradually become aware of the different elements.

Weighting of assessment objectives for A-level English Literature A:

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx %)			Overall weighting (approx %)
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Non-exam assessment	
AO1	11.2	11.2	5.6	28
AO2	9.6	9.6	4.8	24
AO3	9.6	9.6	4.8	24
AO4	4.8	4.8	2.4	12
AO5	4.8	4.8	2.4	12
Overall weighting of components	40	40	20	100

NB There is a slightly different breakdown for the AS level.

Using the Course Materials

The Oxford Open Learning course gives you considerable help with all the necessary elements the specification. After the additional introductory module, in which a variety of literary and critical skills are revised, the course mostly follows the pattern of set books chosen from the specification.

You are advised to work through the course in the order in which the modules occur. However, it would be a good idea to get hold of a copy of each of your set texts early on in your studies, perhaps as far as Module Five, and read all of these from beginning to end as soon as possible. This means that when you come to study a particular book in detail, its general outline will already be familiar to you.

You should aim to read each set text from beginning to end at least twice, and preferably three times during your course of study. By the time you write the exams, you should be thoroughly familiar with the contents of each text. Remember that you will also need to read some criticism and some historical background, so altogether you have a lot of reading ahead of you.

You will find that there are generally one or two TMAs linked to each of the modules. Your answers should normally be submitted to your tutor for marking. When the marked script is returned, you should receive a set of Suggested Answers.

Besides the TMAs there are a number of self-assessment tests (SATs) to be found at certain points in the course, usually at the ends of lessons. *It is vital that you undertake these as full-scale written work.* Only after you have done what is asked to the best of your ability should you look at the Suggested Answers provided. Probably the single most important thing about English Literature

'A' level is that *you should form your own judgements* on what you study. It is no use regurgitating somebody else's opinion, even if you have found it in these lessons! It is difficult to argue a point well unless you have thought of it for yourself and *believe* in it. Have the courage to form your own opinions.

In addition, there are many, many activities throughout the course, located within the lessons. These are smaller pieces of work, usually requiring brief written answers. You will see that there is a space immediately beneath the activity for you to write in the answer. The size of the space is a clue to how much you might write, but do not be afraid to continue on a separate piece of paper. Suggested answers are usually given at the end of the lesson but most activities are open-ended and you may well have produced very different answers. The important thing is that you actively engage with the text. The work you do in the boxes is evidence of your active study and it will also help when you come to revise your work for the examination, taking you back to your train of thought at an earlier date and organising your notes for you.

The Suggested Answers (in particular, the TMA answers) demonstrate the writing style and level of detail you should be aiming for. The standard of the answers is purposefully high. This is the standard you will be working towards, and tutors will not necessarily be expecting you to be writing at this level in the early stages of the course. To ensure that you are actively working towards the style of writing required, it will be useful to read the Suggested Answers in conjunction with the section on Essay Writing Skills at the end of this Introduction.

You will need to plan your study timetable carefully. You should aim to complete your basic studies at least two months before you plan to take the examination, in order to leave you ample time for revision. Most modules will give you further advice on how to plan your revision although there is no one method that will suit everybody.

AS level or 'A' level?

Will you sit the AS or the full A-level examinations? There is nothing to stop you sitting both (the AS level at the end of the 1st year and the A-level after two years). But you should be aware that the marks in your AS examinations can *not* be carried forward towards your A-level examinations – it is a wholly separate qualification.

The AS level is a valuable qualification in its own right, useful for university entry, etc, so some students may wish to stop when they have completed the AS level, perhaps to concentrate on other subjects in their second year. Some students may take the AS as “practice” for their A-level the following year. But if you are planning

to take the full A-level course, you may well want to ignore the AS specification and examinations.

Brief details of both are given below.

Because some students may be uncertain at the outset how far they want to take their studies, we have endeavoured to construct a course which enables students to have it both ways until they are ready to decide. 'A' level students do not wish to engage in detailed study of texts that are AS-only if they are never going to do the AS exam but, conversely, AS-only students do not want to tackle modules that are only required for the full A-level.

To cater for both groups, we have ensured that the key decision point is left as late as possible, almost at the end of the 1st year course. Up until that point, all modules are relevant for both specifications but candidates for the AS exams would then need to study one further text which would not prove directly relevant to the full A-level exams. 'A' level candidates would normally miss that final module out and proceed to their 2nd Year studies.

The Examination Structure

The following information about both specifications is taken from the AQA website, correct at the time of going to press. Please check that it remains current as you proceed through the course.

The AS level Specification (AQA 7711)

This is normally taken as a separate one-year course. Marks cannot be carried forward to the "full" A-level qualification. The AS level is assessed through two written exam papers (no coursework).

Paper 1: Love through the Ages: Shakespeare and Poetry

Study of two texts: one Shakespeare play and one AQA Anthology of Love Poetry through the Ages (pre-1900 or post-1900)

Assessed

- written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- closed book
- 50 marks
- 50% of AS level

Questions

Section A: Shakespeare. One passage-based question with linked essay (25 marks)

Section B: Poetry. One question on printed poem (25 marks)

Paper 2: Love through the Ages: Prose

Study of two prose texts.
Examination will include an unseen prose extract

Assessed

- written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- open book
- 50 marks
- 50% of AS level

Questions

Section A: Unseen Prose. One compulsory question on unseen prose extract (25 marks)

Section B: Comparing Prose Texts. One comparative question on two prose texts (25 marks)

The A-level Specification (AQA 7712)

The full 'A' level is assessed through two longer written exam papers *plus* coursework.

Paper 1: Love through the Ages

Study of three texts: one poetry and one prose text, of which one must be written pre-1900, and one Shakespeare play.

Examination will include two unseen poems.

Assessed

- written exam: 3 hours
- open book in Section C only
- 75 marks
- 40% of A-level

Questions

Section A: Shakespeare: One passage-based question with linked essay (25 marks)

Section B: Unseen poetry: Compulsory essay question on two unseen poems (25 marks)

Section C: Comparing texts: One essay question linking two texts (25 marks)

Section C of the paper for this component is open book. Students may take a copy of their prose and poetry texts into the exam. These texts must **not** be annotated and must **not** contain any additional notes or materials.

Paper 2: Texts in shared contexts

Choice of two options:

Option 2A: WW1 and its aftermath

Option 2B: Modern times: Literature from 1945 to the present day

Study of three texts: one prose, one poetry, and one drama, of which one must be written post-2000. Examination will include an unseen extract.

In this course, Option 2B has been selected. No support is provided for Option 2A.

Assessed

- written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes
- open book
- 75 marks
- 40% of A-level

Questions

Section A: Set texts. One essay question on set text (25 marks)

Section B: Contextual linking

- One compulsory question on an unseen extract (25 marks)
- One essay question linking two texts (25 marks)

Option 2B takes the end of WW2 as its historical starting point and explores both modern and contemporary literature's engagement with some of the social, political, personal and literary issues which have helped to shape the latter half of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century.

Although not an exhaustive list of aspects of modern times, areas that can usefully be explored include: wars and the legacy of wars; personal and social identity; changing morality and social structures; gender, class, race and ethnicity; political upheaval and change; resistance and rebellion; imperialism, post-imperialism and nationalism; engagement with the social, political, personal and literary issues which have helped to shape the latter half of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century.

Non-exam Assessment (NEA or Coursework)

Independent critical study: Texts across time

Comparative critical study of two texts, at least one of which must have been written pre-1900.

One extended essay (2,500 words) and a bibliography.

Assessed

- 50 marks
- 20% of A-level
- assessed by OOL tutor

- moderated by AQA

In Texts across time, students write a comparative critical study of **two** texts. This specification is committed to the notion of autonomous personal reading and Texts across time provides a challenging and wide-ranging opportunity for independent study.

Possible themes for the comparison are indicated in the AQA specification, but this is not a set list and students are free to develop their own interests from their own wider and independent reading.

Texts chosen for study must maximise opportunities for writing about comparative similarity and difference and must allow access to a range of critical views and interpretations, including over time. Students should take an autonomous approach to the application and evaluation of a range of critical views.

These are the rules for coursework:

- The maximum word-count is 2,500 words, excluding quotations.
- Tasks should be designed to ensure that students address all assessment objectives in their essay response.
- An appropriate academic bibliography (not included within the 2,500 word count) must be included.
- An appropriately academic form of referencing must be used.

The following conditions apply to the texts chosen:

- one text must have been written pre-1900
- two different authors must be studied
- A-level core set texts and chosen comparative set texts listed for study in either Love through the Ages or in Texts in Shared Contexts cannot be used for non-exam assessment;
- the essay is comparative and connective so equal attention must be paid to both texts;
- collections of short poems are not recommended as texts for study. Longer narrative poems can be used;
- texts chosen for study may include texts in translation that have been influential and significant in the development of literature in English;

The title 'Independent critical study' highlights the important idea that, within a literature course, students should have the opportunity to work independently. AQA have issued the following instructions:

“Although one common text could, if required, be taught to a whole cohort, at least one text should be studied independently by each student. Texts should always be chosen with [the tutor’s]

guidance and support. Students should also individually negotiate their own task.”

With this in mind, we have selected Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* as a text which allows for a wide range of comparisons with other literary texts. We can *suggest* a second text, but we cannot offer tutor support for the second text. Our AQA Coursework Adviser has indicated that the following titles would be acceptable:

1. Compare and contrast the ways in which social pressures are presented in *Mansfield Park* and *Death of a Salesman*.
2. Compare and contrast the narrative structure of *Mansfield Park* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.
3. Compare and contrast representations of femininity and the mutual attraction of the sexes in *Mansfield Park* and Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale*.
4. Compare and contrast the representations of female independence of Fanny Price and Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* and Beatrice and Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

If you choose one of these titles, you do not need to “clear” it with AQA. We strongly recommend you choose one of these titles! If you want to choose another text to go with *Mansfield Park* (or two completely different texts) or even construct a different title, please talk it over with your tutor and then, if you still want to, you need to seek the AQA English Dept’s blessing for your individual title, possibly via our Coursework Adviser (details to be confirmed). It is likely that the words “compare and contrast” will be required in the title! We regret that OOL tutors cannot assist with NEA that does not involve those five texts.

The *Mansfield Park* module includes some ideas on how a comparative study of the two texts might work and how your extended essay should be presented. You are expected to give equal attention to each of the two texts. This is a tremendous opportunity – you can explore and develop the ideas (and texts) that you are most passionate about. Because of this freedom, AQA expect a very high standard of work and it is not sufficient to produce work that does not seem sufficiently original and personal to you.

Additional Supporting Modules for Coursework

In order to provide a permitted level of support for your choice of second text, OOL has opened up its back-catalogue of literary modules. These were not written for this particular specification but may offer a starting point or a means of exploring alternative texts. These are for independent study, without tutor support. Any work associated with these modules is self-assessed, not tutor-marked.

At any point in your A-level course, you may make a single request to your Student Adviser to give you access to one or (at most) two of the modules in the following list:

Chaucer	<i>The Miller's Tale</i>
Shakespeare	<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
George Orwell	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>
Maya Angelou	<i>I Know why the Caged Bird Sings</i>
Jane Austen	<i>Emma</i>
Julian Barnes	<i>A History of the World in 10½ Chapters</i>
William Blake	<i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i>
Chaucer	<i>The Knight's Tale</i>
Brian Friel	<i>Making History</i>
Thomas Hardy	<i>Selected Poetry</i>
Ben Jonson	<i>The Alchemist</i>
John Keats	<i>Selected Poems and Letters</i>
Shakespeare:	<i>Hamlet</i>
Shakespeare:	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Arcadia</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>
Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>

But please note that these are *old* modules and tutors may well be unfamiliar with the text(s) you have chosen. If you want to use one of these texts as the basis for your coursework and it is not one of the first four, you must confirm with AQA that your choice of text and title are appropriate.

NEA Administration

In terms of NEA administration, the following arrangements are expected to apply:

1. The student makes their initial exam entry through Oxford Open Learning.
2. OOL is then responsible for supervising and marking the Independent Critical Study. Marks will be subject to internal moderation.
3. AQA will apply its own moderation processes and marks *may* be adjusted.
4. Meanwhile, students find a local Examination Centre which is in a position to 'host' the written exam papers. Centres charge differing fees for this service.
5. OOL (the Primary Centre) is informed and the student is registered as a "Transfer" candidate in respect of the written papers.

Please note that OOL cannot host any written papers, nor can a local Centre authenticate NEA (without undertaking the rest of the teaching) – hence the necessity for this "dual" arrangement.

This information is correct at the time of writing but it is a new system and subject to change – please check with your Student Adviser.

Authentication of NEA

In order to be a valid submission, all NEA (coursework) *must* be authenticated. Authentication is the tutor's agreement that the submission is entirely your own work and consistent with the expected level of performance.

Tutors will authenticate NEA on the following basis:

- The student has submitted four or more TMAs prior to the submission of the draft NEA, *and*
- The student has submitted not simply a plan but also a draft of the NEA (otherwise the finished article won't be accepted).

In other words, you cannot have your NEA authenticated unless you go through the drafting process. At the planning stages, the tutor will be happy to discuss your project, partly to authenticate it and confirm its originality, but also to offer guidance on how to improve it and gain higher marks. Please allow plenty of time for this to happen.

Guidance from Tutors

Be aware that tutors are expected to make formal comments and offer guidance on one draft only. They are not permitted to offer comments on draft after draft, although there may be some informal guidance in the period between the first draft and the final version. If time is available, it is a good idea to write a second draft, set it aside for a few days and then read through it carefully, trying to find ways to improve it further, then perhaps a third draft until you are happy to submit your completed piece.

If candidates insist on "excessive" help during the process of composition, the tutor has to take this into account in the marking process.

Marking and Moderation

Your NEA will be marked by your regular tutor or by one of your tutor's colleagues.

When everyone's NEA has been marked, there will be a process of moderation during which the Centre's team leader ensures that all pieces have been marked fairly, according to exam board guidelines. When your mark has been agreed by Oxford Open Learning, you will be notified. If you feel that your NEA has been inappropriately marked, there is an opportunity for appeal at this stage and a fee will be required.

After this, AQA will also have the opportunity to scrutinise and moderate any or all of our internal marking during the period before

the results are announced. Marks *may* be further adjusted at this stage, but we do not have any say in this.

Shelf-life of this specification and course

This A-level specification is examined for the first time in June 2017. The first AS exams were in June 2016.

Studying the Syllabus

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website www.aqa.org.uk.

The syllabus can be purchased from

AQA Publications
Unit 2, Wheel Forge Way,
Trafford Park
Manchester
M17 1EH (tel: 0870-410-1036)

We advise that you obtain a copy of the specification so that you can assess which topics you have covered in the most detail and which ones you will feel happiest about in the exam. AQA can also provide advice booklets on your course, including ‘Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates’. As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to tackle past papers from AQA.

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.

Essay Writing Skills

Being able to write a literature essay is an important skill for success at English Literature A-level. Your essays and literary responses need to be coherent and well-expressed, and although a sophisticated style cannot make up for lack of content, strands of the assessment criteria do refer to the *way* your answers are written. Candidates are expected to be able to communicate their knowledge, understanding, opinions and judgements in an appropriately confident, formal and accurate style. It is recommended that you treat all appropriate self-assessment tests, as well as TMAs, as formal opportunities to practise essay writing.

Steps to a Successful Essay: Thinking

Do not expect to be able to write your essay in one session. Ideally, you should read the task instructions or the essay title one or two days before you begin work on the essay. Go back over the lessons and any advice you have received from your tutor. Build the time needed for this part of the process into your learning programme.

Give yourself time to understand exactly what is being asked. Read and re-read the title, highlighting key words and checking the meaning of any terminology used. Your 'thinking' time should also include brainstorming the answer (mentally or, preferably, on paper) so that by the time you get to the planning stage you should be beginning to select material to include in your writing.

Planning

Whether you plan on paper or using a word-processor, be aware that this is an essential stage in producing a well-structured, appropriately detailed essay. It is important to practise planning so that you can do it as effectively in exam situations. By the time you finish planning, you should have clear ideas about:

- i) the number of points you are going to include, and notes of textual evidence you are going to use in your answer
- ii) the order of the points you are going to make, remembering that the aim should be to:
 - use your introduction to set up the position you are taking or the argument at the heart of the essay
 - base the main part of your essay around a sequence of clear points, all supported with textual reference
 - conclude powerfully, presenting an overview of your argument and ending on a challenging, punchy note.

Writing

If you have given sufficient time to thinking and planning, the actual writing of the essay will be easier. Try writing your first draft quite quickly, following your plan. Your second draft is the time to refine choices of expression and proofread your work so that spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and paragraphing are accurate.

Do not try to adopt a style that is unfamiliar to you; it is better to express your ideas clearly and simply. Avoid over-complicated sentence structures and vocabulary, although you will need to use some specialist terminology correctly. Keep referring to your plan and keep re-reading as you write to make sure you are answering the question. Be aware of the need for a clear structure and focus:

i) **Structure**

Coherence and clarity will only be achieved if you link paragraphs and shape the essay so that the reader feels guided through the

argument. You can get ideas about how to do this from the Suggested Answers. Use phrases to signpost the direction of your discussion (such as ‘In addition’, ‘However’, ‘Nevertheless’, ‘On the other hand’).

ii) **Focus**

Do not stray too far from the title. Each paragraph should add to the sense that you are building towards an argument. Embed one-word and short-phrase quotations into your sentences, interspersing this type of “shorthand quotation” with longer references to text.

Following these steps each time you complete a task or essay should ensure that these techniques become second nature to you. Obviously, in an exam situation there is a need to work more quickly, but do not be tempted to miss out the thinking and planning stages, or you will risk compromising the quality of your response.

An Overall Timetable for your Studies

In this course, we have generally stuck to the order of units as arranged by AQA. But there is no law that says you have to study them in this order.

Most students will leave the Coursework requirements until somewhere close to the end and there are a variety of good reasons for doing so. You want your coursework to reflect the highest level you can reach and that will surely be towards the end of your course. But do not underestimate the amount of time required to do the necessary reading before you plan and draft your coursework. The more time you give yourself, the more drafts you can write.

If you miss your coursework deadlines, there are no excuses or second chances, so that is the first priority. Your overall strategy should be to get ahead of schedule so that you have covered all your set text units by the time you must work on your coursework in earnest.

Your tutor should be able to give you suitable advice on what would constitute a sensible schedule to ensure that you give yourself the best chance of doing well on both units. Good luck!

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