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Foreword

Whether as students or as (former) teachers, English academics’ direct experience of A level (like that of virtually all their other HE colleagues) is likely to have been gained sometime between the early 1960s and the mid-1990s. Some – admissions tutors for example – will have kept in touch with the field. Some may have children who are now or who recently have been studying for A level, or family members who teach in sixth forms. But none will have direct user experience of the major changes introduced six years ago as ‘Curriculum 2000’. Much of what passes for knowledge about A-level in academic departments is a mixture of increasingly distant memory, folklore, and hearsay. In a context where the prior educational experience of students is understandably of growing concern, the English Subject Centre recently decided to commission a short, accessible guide to A level for lecturers. We were delighted when Barbara Bleiman and Lucy Webster of the English and Media Centre agreed to undertake this commission. The English and Media Centre (which began life as the ILEA English Teachers’ Centre, and is now a charitable educational trust) specialises in the professional development of teachers, in consultancy, and in producing high quality study materials. (For further information see their website at [http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk](http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk)) The Centre and its staff possess detailed knowledge and are well-positioned to understand the significance of the evolving picture.

The English Subject Centre has a remit in relation to transition and the ‘first year experience’. But of course these matters are very much more than reified policy objectives. Their meaning extends deep into what it means to teach and to learn ‘English’ in British universities today. One of the many exciting features of our recent activity has been our growing sense of involvement in larger debates about the nature and evolution of the subject. We see this report as an important contribution to a crucial conversation across the sectors.

This report exceeds our initial ambitions. It does much more than simply provide basic information. We believe that it will provide colleagues not only with detailed information about all three current versions of A Level English, but with a vivid snapshot of the AS and A2 environment: the QCA criteria for the three A Levels, the specifications of the Awarding Bodies, typical modes of teaching and assessment. Reading the report will, we believe, give enriched insight into the experience of our first year students. Above all, given that the QCA is in the process of working on another set of changes to A Level, it should enable higher education staff to contextualise those changes, and understand the basis for the latest revisions. They will thus achieve a richer understanding of the knowledge and intellectual habits their students bring with them from college and school. We warmly commend this report to all our colleagues in higher education English.

Ben Knights
Director, English Subject Centre
June 2006
I. The English and Media Centre Survey

Between December 2005 and February 2006, the English and Media Centre conducted surveys amongst practising A Level teachers of English Literature, English Language and English Language and Literature in schools, colleges and Further Education institutions. The survey took the form of three separate questionnaires, each of which was designed to gain insight into the teaching and learning taking place in English classrooms, for example the ways in which requirements of the subject as outlined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority are translated into practice; factors influencing the choice of texts; teaching strategies, including support offered to students and approaches to internal assessment. It was felt that these were areas where too often assumptions are made on the basis of anecdotal evidence, outdated assumptions or data collated by the Awarding Bodies, rather than the personal experience of teachers.

The questionnaires comprising the survey were posted on the English and Media Centre and emagazine websites (www.englishandmedia.co.uk and www.emagazine.org.uk). Teachers were alerted to the questionnaires through the English and Media Centre’s email list, the magazines and when attending courses or Awarding Body moderation days at the Centre. The English Language List, a vibrant teacher community conducted by email, was also used to bring the English Language survey to teachers’ attention.

Survey statistics quoted in this review are based on completed questionnaires from 55 English Literature teachers, 20 English Language and Literature teachers and 21 English Language teachers.

2. Future developments

As we write, (March 2006) A Level is undergoing a process of revision, based on the Education White Paper of 2005. The likely changes will be:

i. A reduction from 6 to 4 assessed modules, to reduce the assessment burden on students and schools.

ii. A rationalisation of the Assessment Objectives, probably leading to three or four AOs in each of the subjects, with no ‘step up’ between AS and A2 and the increase in challenge being demonstrated by tasks and outcomes.

iii. A streamlining of the specific content requirements to make it easier to create coherent courses. For instance, Awarding Bodies may be given more flexibility about whether to place particular requirements in AS or A2. It also seems likely that the ruling out of any texts in translation will be softened, with a requirement that the majority of texts should have been written in English.

iv. An increase in the minimum number of texts studied from six to 12. The aim is to develop more varied ways of reading than only the close reading encouraged by a handful of set texts.

v. The introduction of an ‘extended project’, with students choosing whether to focus it on a subject area or make it more cross-curricular. This is likely to be voluntary and may be the equivalent to an AS exam in value and size.

vi. More challenging questions at the end of A Level exams, or another mechanism for ensuring that there is sufficient ‘stretch’ in A Level.

vii. A possible increase in internal assessment to 40% and internal assessment made compulsory.
In 1997 the Labour Government published ‘Qualifying for Success’, a report detailing reforms to the post-16 education system. It is the changes outlined in this Government report which have become widely known as Curriculum 2000, after the year in which the reforms were implemented in schools.

Broadly speaking the ‘Qualifying for Success’ reforms sought to address anxieties concerning the narrowness of the post-16 curriculum, in which students followed a two-year course in three subjects leading to GCE A Level examinations at the end of Year 13 (Upper Sixth). According to the DfES this ‘traditional programme of full-time study’ was felt to be ‘inadequate preparation for work and Higher Education where a broader range of knowledge and skills are increasingly required.’

The reforms were also designed to encourage widening participation in post-compulsory education and particularly to recognise the achievements of those students who having completed only one year of the A Level course previously left ‘with nothing to show for their efforts’. According to the DfES, Curriculum 2000 was:

‘Designed to encourage schools to offer, and for young people to take up, programmes of study which reflect the importance of additional breadth without compromising rigour.’

To achieve these aims Curriculum 2000 introduced the following changes to A Level.

i. The division of the A Level into two parts AS (Advanced Subsidiary, Year 12) and A2 (Year 13) each comprising three modules, with students encouraged to take at least four subjects at AS level in Year 12, before choosing which of these to continue to study in Year 13, leading to a full A Level qualification.

ii. The awarding of a separate AS qualification as the first part of a full A Level qualification.

iii. A modular structure, with examination sessions offered in both January and June (though a minority of schools and colleges have continued to teach it in a linear way, with all modules examined at the end of the A2 year).

iv. Every specification (syllabus) must include a synoptic paper testing all aspects of the subject and drawing on both the AS and A2 year, worth 20% of the final full A Level.

The clarification of Subject Criteria (see 10.1) and the foregrounding of Assessment Objectives (see sections 5.4, 6.3 and 7.4) also had considerable impact on the teaching and learning taking place at A Level.

Further overarching changes included:

i. The introduction of the Advanced Extension Award (see section 8.0) aimed at the top 10% of students taking A Levels (a replacement for the old ‘Special’ papers)

ii. Limits placed on coursework/internal assessment

iii. The introduction of vocational A Levels and compulsory Key Skills courses to be taken alongside A Levels.
3.1 The relationship between AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A2

Whereas the AS Level available pre-Curriculum 2000 was a qualification with a separate syllabus, AS is now seen as both the foundation year of the full A Level, and as a course in its own right, with accreditation available. A2 modules do not make up a qualification in their own right. AS and A2 are each worth 50% of a full A Level. Currently each is made up of three modules, although further reforms proposed in the Education White paper (2005) suggest that the number of modules in each part may be reduced to two, to reduce the assessment burden on schools, students and Awarding Bodies. (2)

AS is marked at a standard between GCSE and A2 and is available as an Award in its own right. As was intended when the reforms were introduced, many students take 4 or even 5 subjects at AS Level. AS classes may therefore be comprised of students for whom the subject is not one they intend to pursue into A2. As will be discussed below the impact of the ‘4th AS’ has been felt particularly strongly across all three English subjects. A2 was conceived as being slightly more demanding than the legacy A Level. The combination of AS and A2 was therefore deemed to be of equivalent value to the legacy A Level.

3.2 The modular structure in practice

Students usually sit AS modules at the end of Year 12 (with the option of sitting a module in the January session), with A2 modules taken in the second year. However schools can opt to follow a linear model, only entering pupils for AS modules at the end of the second year, along with their A2 modules. Although the linear model is offered by Curriculum 2000, it could be argued that this approach rather militates against a core principle underlying the changes to the A Level curriculum: in addition to widening participation in post-16 education, it was also designed to ‘allow students to monitor attainment and make informed decisions about future learning.’ (3)

Curriculum 2000 has altered the role of the re-sit both through removing restrictions and through the modular structure. Some schools routinely put students in for ‘trial runs’ in January, with re-sits in June if they don’t perform well. Students can decide to ‘cash in’ their AS results to receive their AS award or to hold this over till the end of A2, once they have taken re-sits. Even those who do decide to ‘cash in’ their AS modules, can re-sit papers and use re-sit grades towards the full A Level. (See section 4.4 for a discussion of the impact of re-sits on results in English Literature.)

This report considers the ways in which Curriculum 2000 has impacted on the practice of English teaching and students’ experience of the subject in post-compulsory education.
4. English and Curriculum 2000

4.1 The three Englishes

There are three separate awards: English Literature, English Language and English Language and Literature. These are currently offered by four Awarding Bodies to students in England and Wales:

– AQA
– Edexcel
– OCR
– WJEC

Northern Ireland has its own Awarding Body (CCEA) which is not considered in this report.

Each Awarding Body offers one specification for AS/A2 English Literature, English Language and Literature and English Language, with the exception of AQA which offers two (AQA A and AQA B) for all three English subjects.

Although the same three subjects are offered under Curriculum 2000 as in the years immediately preceding its introduction, there has been a significant change to the way in which English Language and Literature is conceived as a subject. Curriculum 2000 stipulated that English Language and Literature should be a discrete subject, offering a synthesis of literary and linguistic approaches, rather than being a ‘pick ‘n’ mix’ of separate modules from English Language and English Literature courses as had been the case previously. Students are able to take both English Language and English Literature in combination, but are not able to take English Language and Literature in combination with either of the other two subjects.

The main features of the three Englishes are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Language</th>
<th>English Language and Literature</th>
<th>English Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approaches</strong></td>
<td><strong>Linguistic</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Applying frameworks for the study of language&lt;br&gt;• Understanding language development, variety and change&lt;br&gt;• Understanding context</td>
<td><strong>Linguistic and literary</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Using a framework of language&lt;br&gt;• Using literary terminology&lt;br&gt;• Understanding context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texts studied</strong></td>
<td><strong>Anything, including spoken language</strong></td>
<td><strong>50% – any text, including spoken language&lt;br&gt;50% – literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texts produced</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Variety of texts for different audiences, contexts and purposes&lt;br&gt;• Essays&lt;br&gt;• Investigation</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Variety of texts for different audiences, contexts and purposes&lt;br&gt;• Essays&lt;br&gt;• Investigation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 The modules

In common with all A Level subjects there are three modules in both the AS and A2 years in the three English subjects. Most specifications in English subjects provide the opportunity for internally assessed, externally moderated coursework for one of the modules in both AS and A2. In most cases the alternative of an exam is also offered. One of the A2 modules must be a synoptic module, in which all the Assessment Objectives are assessed externally. It is intended to give students the opportunity to show the range of knowledge and skills developed in the course as a whole. The initial ruling that the synoptic paper had to be undertaken at the end of the two year course has since been waived, allowing students to take it at any point in the course. Awarding Bodies meet this requirement in a variety of ways. (See section 5.5 for further details on the synoptic paper for English Literature.)

4.3 Specifications based on the QCA Subject Criteria

The three Englishes share the same structure with all GCE Advanced Level subjects as outlined by the requirements of Curriculum 2000: currently three modules in both the AS and the A2 years, with one of the papers specified as synoptic and a maximum of 30% internal assessment. However, each of the English subjects has its own set of Subject Criteria laid down by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The Subject Criteria determine the scope of the subject, the ‘knowledge, skills and understanding’ and the Assessment Objectives students are required to fulfil. The ‘knowledge, skills and understanding’ sections of the Subject Criteria are included in the appendix in section 10.0. The full Subject Criteria can be found at www.qca.org.uk.

Although all specifications must be written according to the Subject Criteria and must satisfy QCA that they fulfil these requirements before receiving accreditation, Awarding Bodies have the freedom to:

– choose specific set texts
– determine in which modules particular Objectives will be assessed
– decide, within defined limits, the weighting which will be given to each one, and to decide which aspects of the Subject Criteria will be met where and in what ways.

There is also some flexibility in the way the Assessment Objectives themselves are interpreted. The result is five specifications for each English subject, each with its own character. (The grids in appendices 14.1, 14.2 and 14.3 summarise the content of the modules in each specification, giving an overview of the variety of ways the Subject Criteria translate into practice.) Students who have obtained the same grade in the same subject but in different specifications may well arrive in Higher Education having had considerably different experiences and with different strengths and weaknesses.

These differences have resulted in Awarding Bodies gaining a particular reputation in the eyes of some teachers, for questioning that is particularly student-friendly, for instance, or for the encouragement of critical reading, a particularly eclectic and extensive list of set texts, well-organised exam and moderation system or the quality of their teacher support.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which teachers’ perceptions of the different specifications is the result of loyalty based on long-held assumptions rather than an objective reading of the specifications, exam papers and examiners.

The decision about which specification to teach is taken within each school or college, almost always at departmental level, rather than because the institution follows a whole suite of exams from a particular Awarding Body. A survey undertaken by the English and Media Centre (details in 1.0) suggests that in some cases all English departments in a cluster of schools or even in an LEA, follow the same specifications, perhaps in order that teachers are able to share resources or so that training courses can be organised economically.

4.4 Examining, results and reliability

In the summer of 2001, the first year of AS assessment, the national newspapers were full of stories of examining ‘meltdown’ across the spectrum of subjects, with widespread challenges to exam results, large numbers of mistakes and one of the Awarding Bodies facing challenges to its whole system of aggregating marks. These problems could be put down to a number of factors.

i. Early teething problems both in schools and in Awarding Bodies.

ii. The problems the Awarding Bodies experienced in finding enough competent examiners and training them to recognise an agreed standard.
iii. Mistakes in Awarding Bodies’ processing of results.

iv. Teachers not fully understanding the changed significance of Assessment Objectives in examination marking.

Things have settled down to a large extent. However, certain problems remain, as outlined below.

i. Awarding Bodies still struggle to find competent examiners to cover the greatly increased number of entries provoked by numerous re-sits and an increased number of external exams. In the past most examiners were practising teachers but the intense workload carried out over a short space of time, coupled with pressure over ‘getting it right’ or disaffection with the vagaries of the system, has led to shortages. Awarding Bodies now recruit more widely, with newly qualified teachers and even non-teaching graduates being drawn in.

ii. The effects of rigid marking to the Assessment Objectives are still felt, with some anomalous results because students and teachers have failed to recognise the importance of addressing the Assessment Objectives.

iii. There appear to be more variations in student performance from paper to paper than in the legacy A Levels. More students appear to have a wide spread of results (such as grade As in two AS papers and an E grade in another).

iv. On the basis of anecdotal evidence, it appears that teachers are less confident that results will match their expectations than in the legacy syllabuses prior to 2000.

v. The vast growth of re-sits has led to an overall increase in high grades. This can be viewed both as a strength and a weakness, depending on your point of view. One strength is that students are clearly improving their performance by being given the chance to re-visit work and are ultimately reaching a higher level of understanding and competence to write in examination conditions.

However, a weakness of this system is that as more students ultimately achieve higher grades, it is becoming more difficult for universities and other end-users to differentiate between students, particularly at the higher levels. Being able to ‘interpret’ the grade is at the heart of this problem. Without access to raw marks for each paper and information about re-sits, it is hard to see what the final result means. Adrian Barlow in his report on A Level for the English Subject Association (2005) (4) has drawn attention to this with a case study of a student who achieved relatively poor results for his A2 paper but, having re-sat several papers for AS and brought them up to A grades, achieved an A overall. The A was awarded more on the basis of AS achievement than A2 achievement and therefore does not necessarily reflect the student’s standard and potential at the end of the course.

4.5 Results in the three Englishes

A far higher proportion of students studying English Literature gain grade A’s at Advanced Level than those studying English Language or English Language and Literature (32.9% compared to 18.6% and 16.2% respectively for the OCR provisional Advanced results for 2005). In the case of Edexcel more than twice as many students gained grade A in English Literature (26.8%) as did in English Language and Literature (12.6%) in 2005. There are several possible reasons why this might be the case.

i. Teacher expertise, confidence and knowledge may be still greater amongst English Literature teachers.

ii. Progression between Key Stage 4 and A Level is better in English Literature than in the other English subjects.

iii. Far more FE students take English Language and English Language and Literature – this cohort may be more diverse with less conventional academic qualifications; there may also be greater numbers of part-time students.

iv. Students who are reluctant to take on the reading demands of English Literature may (mistakenly) think that English Language, with its opportunities for original writing, projects on spoken language as well as written assignments, is an easier option.

v. Some schools and colleges see English Literature and English Language as being aimed at very different student constituencies, and advise more academically able students to take English Literature rather than English Language. (There is a belief that some universities view English Language as a ‘less academic’ subject than English Literature.)

4. Second reading: a report debating the present state of English at AS and A Level, Adrian Barlow 2005
4.5.1 Results across specifications

Within the same subject different Awarding Bodies show marked differences in the results (see Figs.1-3). In 2005 32.9% of students taking the OCR Advanced Level Literature exam were awarded a grade A; 21.3% of those sitting the AQA A specification achieved the highest grade. While these statistics might, on the surface, suggest that OCR is in fact the easier specification, it may be that it is a self-selecting process with those teachers confident of a very able cohort choosing OCR, and those with a more mixed group opting for AQA A. Alternatively, it might be influenced by the kinds of institutions opting for the different specifications.

4.6 Who takes the English subjects?

Combined entries (5) for English A Level have risen steadily since the introduction of Curriculum 2000, with a sharp rise in AS entries in 2002, the second year of examination.

As might be expected the majority of students taking A Level English Literature are female: in 2004 this ranged from 71% for AQA B to 77.5% for WJEC. WJEC’s increasingly popular English Language and Literature specification is also dominated by female candidates, again 77.5%. The AQA and Edexcel specifications hover around the 68-69% mark.

As has anecdotally been assumed, English Language A Level attracts a greater proportion of male students than English Literature or English Language and Literature, with approximately 65-66% of candidates being female. However, this figure does suggest that it would be a mistake to think of any English subject, including English Language, as anything other than dominated by female students.

English Literature is by far the most popular of the three English subjects, with almost three times as many candidates sitting Advanced Level English Literature than English Language and Literature or English Language, as shown in Fig.4 (over).

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5. Note ‘combined entries’ includes English Literature, English Language and Language & Literature for all Awarding Bodies for AS and A2 results. Interboard statistics are compiled annually by AQA and published by JCQ.
The rise in AS entries suggests that Curriculum 2000 is achieving its aim both of broadening the curriculum at 16-19 and of increasing inclusion, with students able to achieve a qualification at the end of Year 12, without having to continue their studies into Year 13.

While just over 10% chose to drop English Literature at the end of Year 12 in 2004 (itself a substantial increase on the previous year) almost a quarter and just over a fifth of English Language and Literature and English Language students respectively chose not continue their studies into the A2 year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>English Literature</th>
<th>English Language</th>
<th>English Language and Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.1 Entry requirements for AS & A2

In the English and Media Centre survey, the majority of teachers said their department had an entry requirement for the AS Level. Several teachers commented on the gap between GCSE and AS, suggesting that GCSE offers very poor preparation for Advanced Level study. Others noted the pressure they are under from senior management to accept students who have not met the required C+ pass at GCSE English.

Although most departments require a pass at AS from students seeking to continue their studies into A2, several teachers observed that it tends to be a self-selecting process with students who have struggled at AS dropping out. In a number of cases, students are embarking on the A2 course at the same time as re-sitting AS modules.

As a subject in which many students succeed at GCSE, English Literature has always been a popular option at A Level and has catered for a range of abilities and for many students who have no intention of reading English at university — or indeed of going to university at all. Curriculum 2000 has exaggerated this situation: AS classes in all English subjects are larger than they were, with a number of students who will not even go on to study it to the full Advanced Level. As might be expected this has had consequences for the teaching and learning occurring in English classrooms.

4.6.2 Progression to Higher Education

English degrees

Asked how many students went on to read English subjects at university last year, the teachers completing the survey indicated approximate levels between 0% and 65% with more than half the teachers indicating continuation rates of less than 30%. It would be a mistake therefore to view English subjects at A Level solely as preparation for further study at degree level. The perception of several teachers completing the questionnaire is that these numbers are lower than they were pre-Curriculum 2000, suggesting this could be because students increasingly view the three Englishes as difficult subjects.
5.0.1 Statistical background

Since 2003 there has been a very slight decline in the numbers of students sitting A2 English Literature; however, there are still more students sitting the full A Level in 2005 than there were before the introduction of Curriculum 2000. Over this same period AS entries have risen consistently by 9.8%.

In June 2005 56,157 students sat AS English Literature and 51,064 sat A2 English Literature, a decline of 9.1% suggesting relatively few students view English Literature as their fourth AS to be dropped at the end of Year 12.

As Fig. 7 below shows, schools dominate the entries for all Awarding Bodies; the proportion of students achieving grade A is also consistently higher from school candidates than those from Further Education/sixth form colleges. NB: OCR did not provide statistical breakdown by institution.

5.1 The aims of English Literature – QCA’s Subject Criteria

The aims for English Literature as set out by QCA were much as one might expect: to develop ‘interest and enjoyment in literary studies’, to introduce students to ‘the traditions of English Literature’, to develop students as ‘confident, independent and reflective readers of a range of texts’, using ‘critical concepts and terminology with understanding and discrimination.’ (6) Although a text’s context had previously been integral to the Literature Assessment Objectives, the explicit focus on ‘the contexts in which texts were written’ at AS and ‘the significance of cultural and historical influences upon readers and writers’ at A2, has given a different inflection to the subject, which has caused some debate among teachers. Equally the aim of encouraging students to consider ‘other readers’ interpretations’ has formally acknowledged for the first time the possible role for criticism and critical theory in a literature course at this level. (For more on this see Section 5.4.2)

5.2 The content of the course

The QCA Subject Criteria specified the range of reading required at AS and A2:

i. **AS** A minimum of 4 texts covering prose, poetry and drama, to include one play by Shakespeare and at least one other text published before 1900. The texts should be of sufficient substance and quality to merit serious consideration and should have been originally written in English.

ii. **A2** In addition, students should have read a minimum of 4 other texts, covering prose, poetry and drama, to include at least one published before 1770 (pre-Romantic) and at least one other before 1900. The same stipulations about quality and English apply.

The specifications and lists of set texts offered by each Awarding Body must fulfil the range of reading criteria.

In practice, the ‘minimum’ coverage defined in the Subject Criteria is often interpreted as the ‘maximum’ of what is expected and students encounter little more than this limited range, with the exception of wide reading for synoptic assessment. (See more in Section 5.8.3)

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6. Subject Criteria for English Literature AS/A Level, published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. See www.qca.org.uk/3060_5657.html
5.3 Set texts

There are over 170 different set texts (excluding coursework texts and wide reading for synoptic papers) in the current specifications. Awarding Bodies have found different ways of combining elements to fulfil the content requirements of the Subject Criteria. The synoptic papers, in particular, provide quite different ways of incorporating the range of texts and genres specified.

Some Awarding Bodies have taken the decision to give a fairly brief list from which to select set texts. Others offer a great deal of choice. Some are more adventurous in including texts by living writers, literary non-fiction and texts by ‘post-colonial’ writers, moving well beyond the ‘canon’. The requirement that texts should have been originally written in English is considered by some (teachers, students and examiners) to be restrictive, particularly in the way it excludes canonical drama texts by writers such as Ibsen, Chekhov, Brecht.

There are clear advantages to students and teachers of a wide choice of set texts. There is scope for responding to enthusiasms and offering a course which is eclectic and fresh. However, in an increasingly pressured environment and with fewer opportunities for attending external professional development courses, some teachers express anxieties about teaching a text which they themselves have not studied; the availability of support materials and resources is correspondingly important to some teachers and is a factor mentioned by 9.1% of teachers responding to the English and Media Centre survey. Knowing the shortage of examiners and the pressure under which they are working, some teachers express concern that questions are being marked by examiners without adequate knowledge of the text. (See Section 11 for full details of the set texts for 2007.)

5.3.1 Who chooses the set texts?

The process by which students come to study a particular cluster of set texts is outlined below.

1. Awarding Bodies produce lists of texts for each unit as part of the specification. Changes of text are announced at least a year in advance. There is usually a rolling programme of changes, so that just a handful of texts change at any one time.

2. Teachers select texts from the list, on the basis of personal preferences, and knowledge of the types of students they teach. According to the English and Media Centre survey, many departments share the same criteria, with teachers’ own expertise and interest and the nature of students’ interests and ability to cope with the language being overwhelmingly the most frequently mentioned. Gender and ethnicity issues, availability of resources, the length of text, the need to provide variety and the overall balance of the course are also key factors in determining the choice of text (Fig. 8).

3. For coursework or the Synoptic unit, students often have a degree of choice about which texts to study, though the extent to which they or their teachers take up this offer of choice varies greatly. (See Section 5.7 below for more detail.)

5.3.2 What texts are chosen and on what basis

Where several choices are offered, the most popular are often those one might expect – canonical texts by Blake or Chaucer; texts that are accessible and engaging for 16-19 year olds, such as A Streetcar Named Desire, or Death of a Salesman; shorter modern novels rather than great big books; writers that English teachers feel that all students ‘ought’ to have experienced by the end of a two year A Level course. However, the sheer range of texts offered makes it impossible to identify what a ‘typical’ A level student might have encountered. Perhaps the best way of illustrating the A Level experience is a series of brief case studies, showing a small sample of schools and colleges of different types.
Case Study 1: Independent School, Sussex
AS: A Child in Time; Dracula; Shakespeare’s Sonnets; The Tempest
A2: Frankenstein; The Dead School; Blake; Hamlet; A Thousand Acres

Case Study 2: City Technology College, Cumbria
AS: Wuthering Heights; Death of a Salesman; Blake; Taming of the Shrew
A2: Two texts chosen from The Handmaid’s Tale, 1984; Brave New World and News from Nowhere; Edward II; Tennyson

Case Study 3: Sixth Form College (part of F.E. College), South East
AS: Wuthering Heights; Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; Donne; Hamlet
A2: Measure for Measure; Tennyson; The Great Gatsby

Case Study 4: School 6
AS: Spies; The Merchant of Venice; A Woman of No Importance; Larkin: High Windows
A2: Othello; Blake; Wuthering Heights and A Streetcar Named Desire (comparative coursework), World War One Literature

Patterns in the choice of set texts are evident across the Examiners’ Reports: Othello, Antony and Cleopatra and Measure for Measure are popular wherever they are set, as are Chaucer, Blake, Philip Larkin, Carol Ann Duffy (regardless of which collection is set) and Hardy’s and Austen’s novels.

While it is easy to understand why these texts remain popular choices, it is less easy to see why Milton’s Paradise Lost is a popular choice but Dryden is not; Tony Harrison is popular but Anne Stevenson, Gillian Clarke and UA Fanthorpe are not. The Edexcel Anthology, a selection of individual poems by poets, organised in period clusters, is consistently this Awarding Body’s most popular choice.

Frustration is sometimes expressed by teachers at the ‘safe’ choices made by the Awarding Bodies when determining the set texts; a study of the Examiners’ Reports suggests that where more unusual or ‘daring’ texts are offered, whether to fulfil the modern, pre-1900 or pre-1770 requirements, they are rarely taken up in any significant numbers: OCR’s non-fiction texts An Evil Cradling and Letter to Daniel are minority choices; OCR’s synoptic topic on Post-colonial literature is its least popular, while AQA A’s Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, The Country Wife and Women Romantic Poets and the pairing of Hawksmoor and Sacred Hunger are chosen by very few schools and colleges.

5.4 The Assessment Objectives (AOs)
The Subject Criteria spell out the central importance of Assessment Objectives in the examining process. The Awarding Bodies have a small amount of leeway in the weighting of the Assessment Objectives, providing some scope for variation in emphasis. However every specification must fulfil the key Assessment Objectives within the determined range and prove that they are being assessed and weighted in different elements of the course.

Assessment Objectives for English Literature
AO1: Communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression.
AO2i: Respond with knowledge and understanding to literary texts of different types and periods.
AO2ii: Respond with knowledge and understanding to literary texts of different types and periods, exploring and commenting on relationships and comparisons between literary texts.
AO3: Show detailed understanding of the ways in which writers’ choices of form, structure and language shape meanings.
AO4: Articulate independent opinions and judgements, informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers.
AO5i: Show understanding of the contexts in which literary texts are written and understood.
AO5ii: Evaluate the significance of cultural, historical and other contextual influences on literary texts and study.

NB: In AO2 and AO5, (i) and (ii) indicate a step-up between AS and A2.

The AOs were introduced to define more clearly and explicitly the expectations of any A Level student and to sharpen up practices so that teachers were clear about the conceptual requirements of the subject. In addition they were intended to consolidate the perception of English Literature as an academic discipline with its own set of practices. English Literature A Level should no longer be
synonymous with the study of a series of set texts, but should be about teachers inducting students into the disciplines of literary study, a shift in focus spelled out clearly in OCR’s Teacher Support Pack (2000):

‘Up to now most teachers of A Level English will have thought of themselves as teachers of English Literature rather than Literary Studies... Ways of reading and frameworks for studying literature must be an explicit part of what teachers teach and students learn. Teaching literature must now involve reflecting on how we read as well as what we read. Students must learn both the skills of interpretation, the skills of analysing and evaluating differing interpretations. Close reading of texts remains central to AS and A level study but this should be seen as the beginning not the end of the process...In the past knowledge of texts was demonstrated through literary and critical skills and understanding. In the new Subject Criteria knowledge is only one third of the course content: the other two-thirds are literary skills and understanding of literary concepts and contexts [Students will be] assessed not on how well they know texts but on how they use this knowledge to demonstrate a grasp of the skills, concepts and contexts set out in the AOs, literary and critical skills and understanding demonstrated through knowledge of texts.’ (7)

The extent to which this is being applied in practice varies widely. Nonetheless the days when English teachers could base their teaching on an enthusiastic ‘response’ to literature alone are long gone, with the majority of teachers at least aware that they need to consider the elements that constitute the study of literature at A Level and be more explicit about their teaching of these.

The downside of this has been the need for students to fulfil Assessment Objectives that are matched to particular modules, with precise weightings. For example, an exam paper might be assessed on the basis of 10% each for AO4 and AOS and 5% for AO1, the figures for each question ultimately adding up to the full weighting across the whole AS or A2. Markers are usually asked to look first at the ‘dominant’ AOs in making their judgement, followed by a more holistic look at the other AOs. However, some Awarding Bodies do the reverse, marking holistically first and then using the dominant AO to fine-tune the grade. This kind of assessment of the AOs has led to teaching and learning that is focused less on individual interest, exploratory approaches and risk-taking, and more on meeting precise examination requirements. Some teachers and students feel that this has produced a more mechanistic approach to texts and less independence of thought. However, imaginative teachers have interpreted the AOs generously and have responded to the greater challenges of the AOs and synoptic assessment. Equally, some examination papers have resulted in holistic, challenging assessments that have engaged students in exciting work on texts.

Interestingly, in the Advanced Extension Award (AEA), where there is only one Assessment Objective and the scope to select an approach to the texts, student comments have been highly favourable. The Assessment Objective states:

‘The AEA in English will assess candidates’ abilities to apply and communicate effectively their knowledge and understanding of English, some of its methodologies and texts using the skills of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis.’

Students have enjoyed being able to make a choice of focus rather than having it determined for them in advance. However, one needs to bear in mind that the AEA is designed for a very tiny number of the most able students – the top 10% of students – and that in 2005 1748 candidates or 2% of the total cohort sat the AEA for English. Such open questioning might not suit the full range of candidates.

5.4.1 The AOs: how the specifications differ

The Awarding Bodies have taken different approaches to the AOs. Some, such as Edexcel, spread them thinly across questions and modules, so that almost everything is assessed in every module. Others have taken the view that a particular module might offer the best opportunity to fulfil a specific AO and have given it a significantly higher weighting in that module. There are strengths and weaknesses to both approaches. The thin spreading of AOs can be seen as leading to a more holistic approach to marking, where all of the key elements of literary study are in balance and none is artificially foregrounded. However, this can mean that the underlying concepts of the subject, as expressed through the AOs, are not as clearly identified, particularly in terms of the kinds of questions asked in exam papers.

7. OCR AS and Advanced GCE in English Literature Teacher Support, OCR, 2000
As an example of an Awarding Body which has foregrounded particular AOs in each module, AQA B took the view that AO4 (alternative interpretations by other readers) could be sensibly assessed through coursework and through the study of Shakespeare, where there is a substantial body of critical writing. They have given a strong weighting to this in their AS coursework module on a Shakespeare play. This allows students to fully explore different interpretations, including reading and commenting on secondary texts, and has led to very successful student writing.

However, there can be disadvantages to this approach. The foregrounding of different AOs in particular modules can lead to students becoming too concerned to fulfil the AO even if it is at the expense of a well-balanced reading of the text. For example, AQA B’s decision not to assess AOS (contexts) in the study of Blake may dissuade teachers from setting the poems in their literary, political and social context, making it harder for students to develop insightful, coherent, independent readings. The Awarding Bodies have recognised this problem and are beginning to make clearer to teachers the difference between using the AOs in teaching and in assessment.

5.4.2 Interpreting AO4: Alternative interpretations, literary criticism, debates about texts, or just your own view?

Interpretation of the AOs has been another interesting area of difference between the Awarding Bodies. AO4 and AOS, in particular, have been subject to especially varied interpretation. AO4 is the Assessment Objective concerning alternative interpretations by other readers. Should AO4 require an understanding of critical positions, reading and reference to particular critics, some familiarity with different responses to texts, including reviewers, or just the ability to explore different possible interpretations of a text, based on classroom discussion? Are the different readings to be discussed in their own right, or used as a way for the student to develop their own views and opinions, or a mixture of both positions?

Awarding Bodies are particularly keen to ensure that the text, not critical views of it, remains at the heart of study, as is spelled out in this Examiners’ Report from AQA A (2002, the first examination of the new A2 papers):

‘Schools and colleges are ill-advised to concentrate on reading critical opinion at the expense of the text and particularly to encourage their candidates to learn by heart choice quotations from the critics.’

Instead they are encouraged to:

‘Set up group discussion on key areas of dispute, relationship, author intention, language, structure and form and to accustom candidates to support or refute opinions by referring to the detail of the play.’ (8)

leaving teachers to decide for themselves whether these ‘opinions’ come from other members of the class, other readers, reviewers, academics and so on.

In her book Defining Literary Criticism, English teacher Dr Carol Atherton discusses this ‘ambivalence’, particularly highlighting one Awarding Body’s retreat from both ‘other interpretations’ and ‘contexts’:

‘…the reality of AQA specification A turned out to be rather different from the version of English encoded in the new subject criteria. … While the Texts in Time specimen papers had demanded a detailed knowledge of the work of named critics, the papers that were eventually set involved a much more subjective approach that actually required very little discussion of critical sources. Questions typically invited students to consider two opposing quotations and then articulate a personal viewpoint…None of these critical views were dated or attributed, and students were therefore not invited to discuss what contexts might have shaped other critics’ interpretations, or indeed their own.’ (9)

This retreat from a more theorised approach is applicable to the Awarding Bodies in general. The fear that students might simply repeat undigested views or quotations from critics is shared by other Awarding Bodies. For instance, in June 2005 the OCR Examiners’ Report commented that:

‘In some schools and colleges a range of literary quotations had been studied but weaker answers often doggedly quoted unassimilated statements by critics, evidently feeling that it does not matter what is said so long as a critic says it. Too often such critical views were included without being incorporated into any overarching argument from the candidate: sometimes there was such concentration on ‘other readers’ views that candidates lost track of their own responses and arguments. However, the best responses used other opinions to test their own ideas.’

8. AQA A Examiners’ Report, 2002
9. Defining Literary Criticism, Palgrave, 2005
While these positions may in theory be very similar, in practice they have been interpreted rather differently with many teachers reading AQA A’s caution as an instruction not to introduce criticism in the classroom, while those teaching the AQA B specification may well feel encouraged to tackle head on the relationship between other interpretations and independent opinions. Here are some examples of questions from different specifications, in which AO4 is a dominant Assessment Objective.

**OCR Unit 4 Poetry and Drama Pre-1900 (A2)**
How far do you agree that ‘in Dickinson’s poetry isolation is presented as a source of strength’?

**WJEC Unit 2 Choice of Texts (AS)**
a) ‘In ‘The Color Purple’ Walker is more concerned with the rights of women than the rights of black people.’
To what extent do you agree with this opinion?
b) With detailed reference to language, form and structure, discuss the presentation of Shug Avery in Celie’s letter which begins ‘Shug Avery sick and nobody in this town want to take the Queen Honeybee in.’ To what extent is Shug important in the novel?
Question (a) assesses AO4 and question (b) focuses on other AOs.

**AQA B Unit 5 Drama before 1770 – Poetry before 1900 (A2)**
Some readers feel that Tennyson is more successful in presenting human emotions than aspects of the natural world in his poetry.
What do you think? You should refer closely to at least two poems in your answer.

**AQA A Unit 3 Texts in Context (AS)**
How far do you agree with the critic who claimed that ‘Irish identity is the central theme of ‘Making History’ (Brian Friel)?

**EDEXCEL Unit 4 Modern Prose (A2)**
‘Despite Dr Jordan’s interest in her case, the commuting of her original death sentence and her ultimate freedom, Grace receives rough justice.’
Explore your response to Atwood’s presentation of the nineteenth-century criminal justice system in the light of this comment. You should include in your answer an examination of two or more appropriate passages of your choice.

### 5.4.3 AO4 in the classroom – the EMC survey

Although most teachers cite class debate as one of the ways they teach AO4, many teachers draw on a wide range of approaches. An introduction to literary theory is the least common (36.4%), followed by essays by critics (54.5%) suggesting teachers are conscious of the need to integrate different readings and critical positions with the study of the text in order to meet the requirements of the specifications. However, among the group of teachers completing the questionnaire, there appears to be an assumption that AO4 requires more than just class debate, with 72.7% using snippets from critics and the same percentage introducing critical positions in relation to texts.

![Fig.9 What approaches do you use to teach AO4?](chart)

### 5.4.4 Assessment Objective 5 (AO5)

AO5 is the AO related to understanding texts in their context. It is split between AS and A2, with AOSi requiring ‘understanding’ and AOSii requiring the ability to ‘evaluate’ contexts.

All of the Awarding Bodies, in their Examiners’ Reports, express concern about ‘sweeping generalisations’, undigest contextual material, often of an historical nature, appearing in essays in large chunks that are unrelated to the central argument of the essay. As OCR says, ‘a little contextual referencing goes a long way – focus on the text itself is of primary importance.’ (10)

While some Awarding Bodies take a catholic approach to AO5, recognising that ‘context’ might be interpreted...
broadly and being willing to accept evidence of contextual awareness that goes beyond the historical, it remains the case that context is frequently, if implicitly, restricted to ‘context’ that is predominantly historical or cultural, rather than literary, linguistic or generic. This interpretation is perpetuated by many Awarding Bodies’ decision to test AO5 in modules covering the pre-1900 or pre-1770 texts. The AQA B specification spells out what AO5 might entail.

The most important types of relevant context include:

- the context of period or era, including significant social, historical, political and cultural processes.
- the context of the work in terms of the writer’s biography and/or milieu.
- the context of the work in terms of other works, including other works by the same author.
- the different contexts for a work established by its reception over time, including the recognition that works have different meanings and effects upon readers in different periods. This overlaps with AO4.
- the context of a given or specific passage in terms of the whole work from which it is taken, a part-to-whole context.
- literary contexts including the question of generic factors and period specific styles.
- the language context, including relevant and significant episodes in the use and development of literary language.

Thoughtful questioning within particular specifications has helped lead students into fruitful uses of contextual knowledge. Some specifications and some papers within specifications are particularly good at eliciting strong responses, through apt questions that discourage students from artificially adding material simply to fulfil AOs. Equally some Awarding Bodies do recognise that contextual knowledge can be just as interestingly applied to modern texts as to texts from other periods, as is evident in the examples (see right).

These are a sample of the questions set for English Literature since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. They cannot necessarily be used to compare specifications, as they do not represent the full range of question-styles across papers. However, they do give a flavour of the subject at A Level. Many of the questions have been abbreviated, since the rubrics include substantial detail and explanation.

**Edexcel Unit 2 Pre-1900 Prose (AS)**

‘Readers can find both humour and bitterness in Dickens’s satirising of the class divide in ‘Hard Times’.

In the light of this statement examine Dickens’s presentation of class division in the novel.

**AQA A Unit 3 Texts in Context (AS)**

Remind yourself of Act IV Scene I of ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore’ from ‘These holy rites performed,’ to ‘Where the bride-banquet so begins in blood.’

What is the importance of this scene in the context of the whole play?

In your answer, you should consider:
- the presentation of the main characters
- the dramatic effects Ford creates
- the ways Ford uses seventeenth century ideas about justice and revenge.

**AQA B Unit 2 Genre Study (AS)**

How does Shaffer draw upon aspects of the historical background of ‘Amadeus’ to enhance its dramatic interest? You might consider, for example:
- the period in which the play is set
- its setting – Vienna
- the background of court life.

**OCR Unit 1 Drama: Shakespeare (AS)**

How far do you agree that the contrast between Rome and Egypt is central to the play ‘Antony and Cleopatra’?

In the course of your answer:
- explain clearly how Shakespeare contrasts Rome and Egypt
- comment on ways in which this contrast contributes to the play as a whole.
5.4.5 AO5 in the classroom

The EMC survey suggested that teachers appreciate the importance of integrating context into textual study (58.2%) with one teacher commenting that she is aware this is something she had not done adequately in the past. Several others observed that while this is something they recognise as good practice and aspire to, in reality it is an approach that has been somewhat neglected. The approaches selected as most commonly used to teach AO5 (student research – 78.2%, teacher handouts – 76.4%, introductory sessions – 67.3%) give little idea of how the information being provided to students is actually being integrated into their textual study (see Fig. 10).

5.5 Synoptic Assessment

The synoptic paper has been a significant new requirement, presenting some challenges to students and teachers. However, by and large, it has been viewed as an important and positive development, taking students beyond the intense focus on a single text, towards broader understandings about texts in relation to each other and in relation to their literary and cultural contexts. In all specifications, synoptic assessment involves the following:

i. A requirement to read beyond the minimum number of texts set for other papers, in some cases involving substantial reading around a theme, genre or period.

ii. A requirement to apply knowledge and skills learned through other modules to texts that are unseen.

iii. The need to deal with several texts at once, whether whole texts or short extracts, to select appropriate detail, synthesise ideas and draw on wider reading.

This is one area of the A Level course where preparation should, in theory at least, give opportunities for wide reading. Students are also required to demonstrate independence of thought and the ability to transfer knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, however, the EMC survey suggests students’ wide reading is often directed by their teachers and some teachers complain that even here students are often reluctant to take charge of their own learning.

Included here are some example exam questions set by the Awarding Bodies for the synoptic paper.

**AQA A Unit 6 Reading for Meaning**

Students are required to answer both parts of the question.

I (a) Basing your answer on Extract A, Tennyson’s ‘Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington’ and Extract B, Wilfred Owen’s ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’ [both previously unseen texts]:

- write a comparison of the ways the writers describe the different funeral ceremonies
- say how far you agree with the view that Tennyson’s description of a Victorian ceremony is more moving and effective than Owen’s account of death on the Western Front.

[Students are advised to spend about 1 hour 15 mins on this question.]

b) By comparing Extracts C, D, and E and by referring to your wider reading, examine how typical in both style and treatment of subject matter these writings are of literature from and about The First World War.

You should consider:

- language, form and structure
- the writers’ thoughts and feelings about war and contemporary society
- the influence of the time of composition
- the gender of the writers.

[The extracts are an excerpt from the play ‘The Accrington Pals’ by Peter Whelan (1981), a letter written by Vera Brittain to her brother (1916) and a poem by Katherine Tynan (1861-31). All are previously unseen. Students are advised to spend about 1 hour 45 mins on this question.]
OCR Unit 6 Comparative and Contextual Study

Students are required to answer a compulsory question on their chosen thematic area in Section A and make a choice between two questions in Section B.

Section A
Write a critical appreciation of the unseen passage or poem, relating it to your reading of the thematic area (e.g. Satire, Gothic Tradition, 20th Century American Literature etc.)

Section B
Students answer one of two questions, based on a choice of one out of two set texts from the thematic area, plus at least one other text from wider reading.

- e.g. ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’
- ‘While much has been made of America as the land of new opportunity, individual Americans are often portrayed in 20th Century American Literature as backward-looking.’ Discuss this claim by comparing ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’ with at least one other 20th Century American text you have studied.

5.6 Other features of A Level examining

For those unfamiliar with A Level examining, the following aspects may be of interest.

i. There is a requirement for some of the exams to be ‘closed book’. In other words students are not allowed to take texts into the exam room with them. Where they are examined by open book, they can currently take annotated copies into the exam. In these cases, particular editions are frequently prescribed and the definition of ‘annotation’ precisely detailed.

ii. Module exams vary in length. For instance, some AS papers ask one question in one hour. Others ask two questions in an hour and a half or two hours. AS students are now expected to sit two exam papers in one sitting (a maximum of three hours). The A2 papers tend to be longer, with synoptic papers lasting between two and three hours and involving substantial amounts of reading and more than one written task.

iii. The questioning styles vary between specifications and, within specifications, between questions in parts or a single question, questions with bullet points for guidance, questions based on a passage (provided by the examiners or selected by the student) and open questions.

iv. Pre-release material is now used by one of the Awarding Bodies (AQA B Module 6 – the synoptic paper).

5.7 Coursework/internal assessment

5.7.1 The history
Prior to 1991, in the legacy syllabuses there was scope for coursework to play a significant role. The AEB 660 syllabus, almost legendary among teachers and first examined in 1979, initially allocated one third of the marks to coursework. This was increased to 50% for a brief period. Assessment was through a folder of essays and one long essay on more than one text. This enabled teachers to create varied and imaginative courses and led to significant amounts of wider reading, choices of texts and students constructing their own essay titles for their long essay. In 1991, a pronouncement on the excessive use of coursework at A Level and GCSE by Prime Minister John Major led to a reduction to 20% in 1994.

5.7.2 Coursework in Curriculum 2000
In Curriculum 2000 coursework was increased to 30%, with a possible 10% of this figure being oral assessment. The rules prevented ‘end-loading’ the coursework assessment in A2. Compelling Awarding Bodies to divide coursework between AS and A2 effectively meant that coursework became one essay (or two short essays on the same text) at AS and one essay (usually comparing two texts) at A2. Coursework remains optional and all but AQA B and OCR (AS) offer examination alternatives to their coursework modules. Of the 55 teachers who completed the EMC survey, only one chose not to take the coursework option. Though some Awarding Bodies offer the option of oral assessment as one component of coursework assessment, few teachers take up this opportunity on behalf of their students.

In a recent QCA cross-curricular report on coursework in schools (2005), over 95% of English teachers, moderators and candidates surveyed confirmed the value of coursework. (12)

5.7.3 Choosing coursework topics

Approaches to the choice of text and topic are extremely variable. Some teachers give an entirely open choice for coursework, whilst others offer three or four options. Some teachers decide the text for a whole group of students. The Awarding Bodies encourage an element of choice, recognising that it provokes more engaged study and writing but not all teachers follow this advice.

According to the EMC survey, very few teachers (7.3%) give students an entirely free or even negotiated choice of text. 20% give a limited choice, with 54.5% of teachers setting students the same text. With the task there is more negotiation (34.5%) with 32.7% offering a limited choice and only 9.1% setting all students the same task. Several of the teachers who set the same text then give students a limited choice or negotiate with them over the task; it is very rare for all students to do the same text and the same task at both AS and A2. The questionnaire suggests that teachers are more inclined to control both text and task for AS coursework than A2.

5.7.4 Managing coursework and support for students

Most institutions, strongly supported by Awarding Body advice, do the following:

i. Spell out clearly the parameters of the help that students will receive (e.g. one draft will be looked at and commented on, followed by a second and final draft).

ii. Give students clear guidance on plagiarism, sourcing and attribution of quotations and opinions and use of bibliographies.

iii. Give clear deadlines for work to be completed.

Having said this, the extent of help given varies considerably.

i. Some institutions teach the text to the whole class, which inevitably gives considerably more direction and support to students than where students determine the text for themselves, read it and explore it entirely independently. Of the teachers completing the EMC survey, 61.8% said students read the coursework text independently; however, 70.9% teach the text in class, suggesting the majority adopt both strategies.

ii. Many teachers will write comments on first drafts and allow more than one early draft before the final essay is accepted (58.2% of those completing the EMC questionnaire). Some give mainly aural feedback, to avoid the dangers of re-writing student work for them. 78.2% of teachers surveyed hold one-to-one discussions with students; in no case was this the sole form of support offered to students. It is clear from the survey that teachers offer a range of strategies and approaches to support students in their coursework essays in ways which should extend their ability to read, construct arguments and present academic essays beyond the A Level classroom.

iii. In current practice, it seems relatively rare for institutions to offer more help than would be advisable if coursework is to be a true reflection of students’ ability. Evidence of this is obviously difficult to obtain, as institutions which do cross this line do not proclaim this to the world. On the basis of anecdotal evidence however, it seems that such institutions are the exception rather than the rule. The recent QCA review into coursework at GCE and GCSE suggests that the overwhelming majority of teachers and students (86.4% of those questioned) continue to regard coursework as a ‘valid and reliable method of assessment’ (13).

On the question of sourcing secondary material for coursework essays, practice is extremely variable. Many teachers will give students hand-outs with extracts from critics and reviews, or copies of whole articles. Some will expect students to do an element of their own research. The majority of our surveyed teachers (70.9%) explicitly discuss plagiarism, sourcing and academic conventions, recognising that plagiarism is an increasing problem and warning students of the implications.

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13. See A Review of GCE and GCSE Coursework Arrangements (QCA, 2005), page 33
5.7.5 How is coursework marked?
In the first instance coursework is assessed by the class teacher. It is then internally moderated in each school or college, typically through sampling of work at a department meeting but sometimes with every essay being moderated. This internal assessment is then externally moderated or validated by Awarding Bodies. Arrangements for external moderation vary but all involve a sampling of student work from each institution. Many also require attendance at standardisation meetings prior to internal assessment, where student work is discussed and graded. The moderators from the Awarding Bodies often play a role in agreeing texts and titles in advance, or in offering advice on the suitability of tasks. Teachers may award a mark but grades are decided on a statistical basis by the Awarding Bodies following external moderation. At AS and A Level moderation is not merely a matter of ratification.

Examples of coursework essays that have been submitted for AS and A2
1. Examine the ways in which the nature of kingship is presented in 'Henry V', and show how this might cause problems for a modern audience. (AS, Edexcel)
2. The women characters in 'Othello' have been seen by some critics as less convincing and less interestingly portrayed than the central male characters. Other readers have seen them as being both fascinatingly complex and central to the key issues of the play. An interpretation of the way in which Shakespeare presents the female characters and their role in the play. (AS, AQA A)
3. An examination of Shakespeare's presentation of Beatrice in the play ‘Much Ado About Nothing’. (AS, AQA A)
4. Compare and contrast the ways in which ideas of decayed beauty are portrayed in 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' and 'The Magic Toyshop'. (A2, AQA A)
5. Margaret Atwood in ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ and Khaled Hosseini in ‘The Kite Runner’ both use a first person narrator. Compare how this technique is used in these texts to create and convey meanings about the individual’s state of mind in relation to society. (A2, AQA B)
6. In what ways do ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ and ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’ explore the individual’s reaction to living in an authoritarian society? (A2, AQA B)

5.7.6 Creative writing within coursework
In the AEB 660 syllabus, creative writing that focused closely on set texts was allowed. Students had to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the text through tasks such as writing from a character’s perspective, re-writing a chapter, writing in the style of the writer and so on.

In Curriculum 2000, two Awarding Bodies (OCR and Edexcel) offer students the opportunity for one out of two of the AS coursework essays to be an imaginative piece of writing, or personal writing plus commentary, based closely on the text. Aside from this, there are no opportunities for creative writing to be examined in English Literature A Level. Some teachers do offer creative writing as part of their classroom work, as ways of teaching the text. However, the EMC survey suggests that this is relatively rare: it is a teaching approach used ‘often’ by only one teacher (1.8%) and ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ by 58.2%. There are more opportunities for the assessment of creative writing in the English Language and English Language and Literature A Levels (see sections 6 and 7).

5.8 Classroom approaches and pedagogy
5.8.1 Time allocated to English teaching
It might be assumed that at A Level students have access to the same amount of teaching time each week, regardless of the institution in which they are studying. Although based on only a small scale study, the results of the EMC survey suggest this is far from the case: the amount of time allocated to English Literature varies considerably from three 50-minute sessions (150-minutes) to eight 60-minute sessions (480-minutes); however between 240 and 300 minutes seems to be the most common. Lesson lengths varied between 35 minutes (some of which might be organised into double lessons), 50 minutes (never organised into doubles) to three-hour whole morning sessions. In addition to the contact/teaching time, two schools specifically allocated independent study time to English. In most cases teaching is shared between two
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teachers, each taking responsibility for the teaching of separate modules.

5.8.2 Reading the texts

Of the teachers completing the survey, 50.9% take a term to teach a text, with 16.4% taking half a term. It seems that structuring the course around the reading requirements is still the norm, although a small minority of teachers outlined courses in which preparation for the synoptic unit, in particular wider reading, takes place throughout the two years of the course.

56.4% of teachers said that students read the text independently, with several spelling out that this is what happens with novels but not with plays or poems. Another commented that this is the ideal but that many students struggle. 74.5% read key passages in class but only 10.9% read the whole text in class, suggesting teachers are trying to lead students towards greater independence. There was a clear belief amongst the teachers completing the survey that the reading requirements of GCSE are inadequate preparation for A Level study: students have little experience of reading whole texts or of reading independently.

5.8.3 Wider reading

The specifications for Curriculum 2000 were intended to increase the opportunities for wider reading within the A level curriculum. As the Teachers’ Guide for OCR (2000) emphasises:

‘detailed study of individual texts should now be part of a course in which wider reading is essential not an optional extra or pious hope….’ (14)

Assessment Objectives 2 and 5 require a knowledge of the literary context in which the text was written, while Assessment Objectives 4 and 5 encourage the reading of critical and contextual material. The synoptic paper explicitly requires students to read widely. In practice the amount of wider reading taking place and the extent to which this is supervised – or even taught – varies widely. There were repeated comments in the EMC survey that most students will do little wider reading unless it is set and a general sense of disillusionment:

‘Most do very little though lists are provided’

‘Most rely on teachers to do their additional reading for them’.

For all modules other than the synoptic, wide reading is attempted in relation to set texts; in the majority of cases this occurs in the classroom under the direction of the teacher. A common approach is for students to read another novel by a set author or another work from the same period although some teachers interpret wider reading as referring specifically to critical and contextual material. The main comment, in the EMC survey, however, was that students do very little despite reading lists and a departmental library being made available. Individual schools are addressing this problem and attempting to encourage wider reading in a variety of ways, including: allocating some independent study time to reading and completing a reading log; book groups, guided library visits, as well as directed wider reading for specific modules; a 2-day residential with workshops specifically on wider reading.

The nature of the synoptic paper obviously encourages teachers to support their students in reading widely. Although on a specific topic (WWI literature), AQA A students do seem to read a wide range of texts including complete novels. Although all genres are included, novels and poetry dominate. A number of departments have put together their own anthologies with a range of extracts; several teachers commented that they then encourage students to go on and tackle the complete text themselves.

Teachers following the OCR specification choose a topic area from a set list, teach one set text and at least one other as a comparison. A common approach is to read two further novels, plus extracts and short stories, or to read extracts together and encourage students to read the full text. ‘As widely as possible’ – a common phrase (and perhaps hope) gives little indication of how much wide reading is actually done.

AQA B differs from the other specifications in that the synoptic paper is not based on a set text or topic but on pre-release material. The survey suggests this prompts opposing responses from teachers: one said that wider reading is not relevant for the synoptic paper although it is encouraged; another said they do lots as a reading list is provided.

14. OCR AS and Advanced GCE in English Literature, OCR, 2000
5.8.4 Teaching approaches

Whole class discussion is the approach used ‘often’ by most teachers (78.2%), while whole class discussion with questions is used ‘often’ by 74.3% and was chosen by 45.5% as one of the three approaches they use most frequently. Although the variations on ‘discussion’ are the most popular approaches, it is interesting that with the exception of creative writing, every option given is used ‘often’ by at least three teachers. The charts in Fig 12 and 13 summarise the results of the EMC survey. They suggest that in many classrooms students will experience a wide range of teaching approaches over the course of the two years, although class discussion, reading and analysis in class and exam practice will dominate. With a few exceptions, neither the very passive approach of the teacher lecture nor the very active drama/Directed Activities Related to Texts approaches are commonly used. An interesting finding of the survey is that teachers following the AQA A specification selected ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ for a far wider range of approaches than did those teaching the OCR specification; it is also notable that ‘teacher lecture’ is an approach used more frequently by OCR teachers in the survey. While this finding may well not be of significance, it is possible that the teaching strategies employed reflect the type of institution, and therefore student, following the different specifications.

5.8.5 Writing

During their AS and A2 course, the kinds of writing students usually undertake are:

i. internal assessment

ii. short pieces of exploratory writing to support the reading of text

iii. short timed pieces in preparation for exam essay-writing

iv. some short creative responses as a way of analysing the text

The most common form of support for writing is feedback on drafts (80%) with explicit teaching of conventions, bullet point support, one to one discussion also used ‘often’ by at least 30% of teachers. Clinics, modelled writing and the provision of key phrases are used less frequently, with writing frames used only rarely.
6.0.1 Statistical background

English Language was first introduced as an Advanced Level subject in 1981-2 following experimental papers and pilots in London and JMB Examination Boards. The Joint Matriculation Board syllabus was taken up by a very small number of schools: by 1985 there were only 210 entries. It was then opened up to schools nationally and by the end of the 1980s other exam boards were offering an English Language Advanced level syllabus.

Since 2003 the number of candidates entering Advanced Level English Language has risen by 1,981 candidates to a total of 16,964. AQA B, the specification that originated in the JMB syllabus, continues to dominate with 63.8% of all candidates studying this specification. However, it is increasing at a slower rate than any of the other specifications, with the exception of OCR. The number of students following the WJEC specification has increased by 47.8% from 693 candidates in 2003 to 1,024 in 2005 and now accounts for 6% as opposed to 4.65% of all entries. OCR is the only Awarding Body to register a decline in the number of candidates entering its English Language Advanced Level. Already the smallest cohort (489 candidates in 2003), by 2005 it had only 361, just 2.3% of the total entry.

The chart in Fig. 14 shows the proportion of candidates entering Advanced Level Language in 2004 from schools and Further Education/Sixth Form Colleges for each Awarding Body. As with Lang/Lit, the proportions entered from FE/sixth form colleges is greater than for Literature and AQA A and WJEC are once again dominated by these entries. Although the percentage achieving grade A from both the school and FE/sixth form college entries is increasing, candidates from schools continue to dominate the A grades (fig.15).

6.0.2 Students’ choice of English Language and destinations

A Level English Language is taken in combination with a wide range of other subjects, including Maths and Science. A small number of candidates take both English Language and English Literature as separate subjects. It is important to acknowledge the very distinct nature of the two subjects: they complement but do not replicate each other. Nevertheless, there is a belief in some schools and colleges that students who take both subjects will be at a disadvantage when applying for places at university — a belief that is rooted in a misunderstanding of the very specific nature of English Language.

English Language prepares students for a wide range of careers, including teaching, journalism, advertising, speech therapy, law and public relations. It provides an excellent general foundation for any career that requires communication skills.

According to teachers responding to the EMC survey between 5% and 15% of students taking English Language go on to study related subjects in higher education. There was also a general feeling that this number is rising.
The aims for English Language focus on the students’ interest and enjoyment in the ‘use of English’ – both spoken and written. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) states as its aims for Advanced Level English Language:

2.1 AS and A Level specifications in English Language should encourage students to develop their interest and enjoyment in the use of English, through learning more about the structures and functions of English, drawing on their experience and knowledge of language change and variation. Students should learn to express themselves in speech and writing with increasing competence and sophistication, undertake a varied programme of reading, and develop skills of listening critically and attentively to spoken English.

2.2 AS courses should introduce students to an understanding of concepts and frameworks for the study of language, and enable them to apply these to investigate their own and others’ use of speech and writing. AS courses should develop students’ skills in speaking and writing for different purposes and audiences, as well as their ability to respond perceptively to the different varieties of English they hear and read.

2.3 A Level courses in English Language should develop further students’ knowledge of and ability to apply a range of linguistic frameworks to a wide variety of texts from both the past and the present. A Level students should be increasingly able to select and use the frameworks most appropriate for their investigation and research, and express themselves with fluency and competence in speech and writing.

The different specifications cover a broad array of topics such as child language acquisition, political correctness, language and technology and gender-based variation. All encourage students to draw on their own experiences as users of language, and to make connections between the knowledge they gain in class and their own observations of language in use.

One of the most striking aspects of the course is the difference between it and the ‘English’ that students will have encountered at GCSE. Students taking both English Language and English Literature often report that the gap between GCSE and AS Level is much more pronounced in English Language than in English Literature. They have to learn technical terminology and get to grips with a relatively sophisticated range of concepts such as theories of language acquisition, linguistic determinism, phonetic transcription and the methods used to describe and analyse spoken English. There are clear parallels between English Language and some aspects of A Level Psychology, and it is perhaps most useful to think of A Level English Language as more of a social science than a humanities subject.

Awarding Bodies may give suggested lists of specialist terms and concepts in their specifications to help teachers establish the areas and the level of knowledge (especially linguistic knowledge) that is required. However, different Awarding Bodies, and to some extent different schools and colleges, tend to use different terminology, so students may not share the same specialist vocabulary even if they have followed the same course. For example, some specifications and exam questions use ‘diction’ rather than ‘lexical choice’.

The course also gives students the opportunity to develop their own expertise in writing in different genres, for different audiences and for different purposes. This is not necessarily in order to develop their creative talents (though it may do so) but to help them understand the different forms and functions of the language. Students are assessed not only on their abilities as writers but on their explicit understanding of how they are using language, through the production of a commentary on specific aspects of their language use. Nevertheless, the weighting given to students’ independent writing is never more than 20% of the final A Level grade in any specification, and in three specifications (AQA A, Edexcel and OCR) it is only 15%. It is often claimed that A Level English Language is actually ‘A Level Creative Writing’, when in fact this is far from the truth.

15. www.qca.org.uk/3063_2395.html

6. English Language
It is important to understand that there is no limit here to the kinds of texts that can be studied. There are no set texts for this course. Students’ understanding of language has to prepare them to tackle any text: spoken or written, old or recent, for any audience or context.

During the AS year QCA requires that students gain a ‘broad knowledge and understanding’ of the key features of systematic frameworks for the study of language. They must also understand how these features of language are affected by mode (speech or writing), context, and personal and social factors.

They also have to demonstrate their ability to apply the above knowledge and understanding systematically to a variety of texts, including transcriptions of spoken English.

In the A2 course this knowledge is expected to become deeper and broader. In particular, they will be expected to understand how language changes over time and be evaluative in their analytical approaches, that is, be able to decide which linguistic frameworks are most appropriate in analysing a particular example of language in use.

6.3 The Assessment Objectives

The Subject Criteria imply a ‘language in use’ model of linguistic study and this is reflected in the Assessment Objectives.

**Assessment Objectives**

AO1: Communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to the study of language, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression.

AO2: Demonstrate expertise and accuracy in writing for a variety of specific purposes and audiences, drawing on knowledge of linguistic features to explain and comment on choices made.

AO3: Know and use key features of frameworks for the systematic study of spoken and written English.

AO3ii: Apply and explore frameworks for the systematic study of language at different levels, commenting on the usefulness of the approaches taken.

AO4: Understand, discuss and explore concepts and issues relating to language in use.

AO5: Distinguish, describe and interpret variation in the meanings and forms of spoken and written language from different times according to context.

Although all specifications have to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the same key linguistic concepts, different Awarding Bodies have different emphases. Some, for example AQA A, focus on acquisition or representation as key areas of study.

6.4 Example questions on English Language

These are a sample of the questions set for Language since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. They cannot necessarily be used to compare specifications, as they do not represent the full range of questioning styles across papers. However, they do give a flavour of the subject at A Level. Many of the questions have been abbreviated, since the rubrics include substantial detail and explanation.

**AQA B Unit 1 Introduction to the Study of Language (AS)**

1. Study texts A-G on the next six pages. These extracts illustrate different varieties of language use. Discuss various ways in which these texts can be grouped, giving reasons for your choices.

2. Taking either Text A or Text B and any two of the remaining texts, analyse some of the language features of these texts and explain how these are affected by context.

Use some of the following language frameworks where appropriate:

Lexis; grammar; phonology; semantics; discourse; pragmatics; graphology

**WJEC Unit 1 Using Language (AS)**

Read the notes about Caerphilly Castle on the following pages and study the ground plan. Then using the information in the notes:

a) Imagine that you work as a tour guide. Your job is to take groups of tourists on guided tours around one of Wales’s oldest and most important castles, Caerphilly Castle. A typical group would consist of about 30 tourists of diverse backgrounds and different ages. Write the text for the talk you would give to a group as you guide them around the site (approximately 350 words).

b) Write about the language you have used (approximately 400 words).

Drawing on your knowledge of language frameworks and
linguistic features, you should explain and comment on the
language choices you have made.

OCR Unit 1 Frameworks for the Description of
Language (AS)
In the following transcription, Suzanne, a 17-year-old overseas
student who is studying in the UK, is talking to her tutor. This
is her first study visit to Britain.
Identify the language features in this transcription that are
typical of a spoken interview.

AQA A Unit 6 Language Debates (A2)
a) Read Transcriptions 1, 2 and 3. Comment linguistically on
the different meanings conveyed by the rising intonation used
by each of the speakers.
b) Explain the methodology you would use to investigate the
spread of a high rising intonation at the end of an utterance
in the British Isles.
c) Read Text A. Analyse and evaluate the ways Kirsten Sellars
uses language to present her views about the nature and sig-
nificance of the accents people use. How convincing do you
find her opinions?

AQA B Unit 2 Language and Social Contexts
(AS)
The following table is a summary of some research carried
out at the end of the 1980s about spoken English around
the UK.
Discuss the idea that features such as those in the table are
more acceptable in some contexts than in others.
In your answer you should refer to:
• the table
• relevant ideas from language study.

Edexcel Unit 6 Editorial and Language Topics
(A2)
The following text is a Notice of Sale that appeared in the
‘Pennsylvania Gazette’ on 2 January 1750. It advertises an
auction of a piece of land with some property as a result of
bankruptcy.
i) Rewrite the text as it might appear in a present-day flyer,
to be distributed to local households advertising the sale.
ii) Select appropriate language frameworks and systemati-
cally analyse and evaluate the changes you have made,
relating your comments to the context and identifying any
features typical of speech or writing.

6.5 Textual production
In terms of skills in textual production, several Awarding
Bodies, including OCR, use a ‘desk study’ or similar task
where candidates have to edit and re-write material in
exam conditions; other Awarding Bodies use coursework
to allow students to demonstrate production skills in a
wider choice of writing task. These tasks clearly have the
capacity to introduce students to, and prepare them for a
wide range of more sophisticated applications of communica-
tions skills as well as enabling them to take a critical ana-
lytical stance towards the uses of language in society. AQA
A’s synoptic paper, for example, requires students to write
about an aspect of language for a non-specialist audience.

AQA A tasks set in recent years
eg. I Your task is to write a feature article to appear in a broad-
sheet newspaper about the use of high rising intonation in
response to the following comments on it in the media:
• The comedian Stephen Fry has appeared on television
describing the ‘invasion’ of Britain by this feature and
complaining about how irritating it is.
• Letters to the paper have noted its increasing frequency
and described it as ‘infuriating’ and compared it to an
infection.

eg. 2 Your brief is to explore who uses this high rising intona-
tion, what it signifies, how it is spreading and people’s
attitudes to it. Your article should examine linguistic issues
in an informative and entertaining way. (June 2004)

Your local radio station is introducing a weekly documentary
programme aimed at older teenagers.
Your task is to write a scripted item to appear in the
radio programme. Your brief is to explore the language and
use of texting and emails, and attitudes to these new forms
of language. Your item should examine linguistic issues in an
informative and entertaining way. (January 2004)

eg. 3 Write an editorial to appear in ‘The Independent’. Your
editorial should explore and evaluate people’s different
attitudes to politically correct language and its signifi-
cance. (June 2003)

6.6 The investigation of language
Another key area of assessment is the investigation of
language, which allows students to undertake an independ-
ent piece of research. These investigations form the basis
of A2 coursework and involve the collection and analysis
of original data. For many this is a very rewarding aspect of the course and convinces some that they would like to continue with linguistic study at degree level.

Examples of investigations undertaken by students:

- A study of the interactional strategies used by teachers of children with autism.
- An exploration of the storytelling skills of children aged 6, 8 and 10.
- A comparison of the persuasive techniques used by car salespeople with male and female customers.
- A study of the linguistic codes in operation on a range of message boards.
- An analysis of the written English of ESL students.
- Investigation into male/female styles of teaching.
- Analysing children’s writing styles.
- Studying language change through an analysis of grave-stones.
- Gendered use of taboo language.
- Language of sports coaches.
- Language of humans talking to animals.
- Analysing the integration of a community language into English.
- Language and ideological change in children’s fiction.
- Analysis of contemporary rhetoric (including TV auction channels).

6.7 Classroom approaches and pedagogy

6.7.1 Comparing the demands of English Literature and English Language

There was some agreement amongst the teachers completing the EMC survey that many students expect English Language to be easier than English Literature, perhaps because its reading requirements are less or perhaps because they expect it to be a continuation of GCSE English. The majority of teachers felt that this was a mistake and that the subject is as rigorous as English Literature, with a wider range of skills to be developed. However, there were some others who felt that after the initial shock and the completion of the first unit, English Language allows less able students to achieve something more than English Literature, despite the fact that the higher grades are just as hard to gain.

6.7.2 The strengths of the course

According to the 21 teachers completing the EMC survey, English Language has a number of strengths as an Advanced Level subject. Although this was presented as an open question, the same strengths appeared again and again in teachers’ responses, in particular: its relevance and accessibility; its explicit connection to the world of work and students’ future career choices; the opportunities for original writing and independent investigations; its boyfriendliness; its variety; the combination of creative and analytical work; the fact that it allows the less able, the average and the most gifted students to achieve.

6.7.3 Classroom practices and teaching approaches

There was less variety in the amount of time allocated to teaching than in English Literature with between 4.5 and 5.5 hours being by far the most common, with the majority of students being taught by two teachers. In several cases at least one lesson a week is reserved for coursework. On the basis of the survey it seems most students are expected to spend between 4 and 5 hours a week working independently on their A Level English Language studies, the range being from 2 to 6 hours, though as many teachers pointed out, this is an expectation — or hope — rather than necessarily the reality.

Responses to the EMC survey suggest English Language teachers use a wide range of teaching approaches, as the figures 16 and 17 show. Only teacher lecture, drama approaches, modelled reading and Directed Activities Related to Texts are used ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ by a significant number of teachers. As with English Literature the most active and most passive approaches are used least often. However, both teacher lecture and creative writing are approaches used by a considerably higher proportion of English Language teachers than English Literature. Given that English Language is a subject which requires independent investigation and analysis alongside the dissemination of a body of knowledge this is perhaps unsurprising.
The responses to the EMC survey suggest that English Language students are given considerable support with writing (fig.18); this may be because the focus of the subject is more explicitly on the way language is used in different contexts, including a range of different written forms, or that the forms of writing are rather different from anything students have previously encountered in English.

According to the EMC survey, teachers of English Language A Level seem to be a particularly energetic and inventive group. Faced with teaching content, concepts and terminology that can be challenging for students at this level, many teachers adopt a wide range of classroom approaches, including games, role-plays, seminar presentations, interactive whiteboard activities and so on. Language teachers make great use of both Internet resources and current material in the media. Some committed teachers have created vibrant weblogs for their students, with regularly updated items on topical issues, debates and links to articles in newspapers and other websites. One good example is the St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College website (http://www.englishlangSFX.blogspot.com). Having said this, teachers new to the subject often feel overwhelmed and uncertain about how to teach a subject that is so different from their previous experience, and English Language teachers can perhaps be characterised as either seriously lacking in confidence, or highly skilled and inventive.

### 6.8 Where teachers find support

Many teachers who start teaching A Level English Language do so without having studied English Language or Linguistics as a significant element in their own first degree, neither do they receive significant in-service training before starting to teach it, or thereafter. Short one day or two day courses are offered by some private or non-profit making organisations, such as the English and Media Centre and some University Departments, such as Sheffield and Reading. Sheffield in particular, has a regular programme of training for teachers, as well as a programme of lectures for A Level students. Some individuals in higher education (Professor Dick Hudson, Professor Ron Carter, Angela Goddard, Tim Shortis, Adrian Beard and others) have put a substantial commitment into working with Language A Level, either by working as Examiners or Chief Examiners for Awarding Bodies and so helping to shape the specifications, or by offering their expertise through helpful sections on their websites, designed for teachers or by writing books for A Level. There has almost certainly been more of a close working relationship and overlap between some members of the English Language community in higher education and A Level teachers than is common in the area of English Literature teaching.
Because teachers have had to learn new subject knowledge, largely on their own, they have had to establish strong support networks and a culture of self-help has arisen; these have parallels with the kind of active networks that have sprung up in the Media Studies field. (By contrast, English Literature teachers may feel that they ‘know’ their subject and have a less urgent need to share resources and ideas, or perhaps feel less willing to admit to areas of limited expertise because they feel that they ought to ‘know their stuff’). One of the most important of the English Language A Level networks is ‘The English Language List’, an email list where people post up resources, ask questions, offer advice and debate issues. This list is frequented by teachers, academics and others and it is not uncommon for a tricky question of grammar, or a contentious debate to draw responses from people in higher education, as well as teachers. The English Language A Level community seems to be particularly generous-spirited and whole sequences of work, classroom resources, powerpoint presentations are shared, as well as offers of phone or email support to novices to the subject.
7.0.1 Statistical information

Between 2003 and 2005 there was an overall increase in the number of students sitting A Level English Language and Literature of 7.7%, from 14,734 in 2003 to 15,889 candidates in 2005. The split between the Awarding Bodies is much more even in English Language and Literature than it is for either English Language or English Literature. Where AQA A dominates the English Literature A Level, it is AQA B which has more than a third of the English Language and Literature candidates, almost twice the number of entries for AQA A and Edexcel.

However, the three main boards showed the smallest percentage increase with Edexcel increasing by just 0.09% between 2003 and 2005. The most significant increases were experienced by the smallest Awarding Bodies: OCR increased by 12.1%, slightly increasing its share of the market, while WJEC showed an increase of 35.9% (see Fig.19).

A snapshot of English Language and Literature entries for 2004 shows that a far higher proportion of entries are from Sixth Form Colleges/Further Education colleges than is the case for English Literature. AQA A and WJEC, in particular, are dominated by non-school entries. The chart in Fig. 20 shows the proportion of students gaining grade A is higher from school than from FE/sixth form colleges.

7.1 The aims

It is important to remember that this ‘English’ subject did not exist in this form before Curriculum 2000. It is a new framing of the subject. The QCA Subject criteria make it very clear that aspects of linguistic and literary study are to be combined into a ‘coherent’ area that ‘should encourage students to study language and literature as interconnecting disciplines in ways that deepen their understanding and enjoyment of these studies.’ (16)

English Language and Literature combines strands from both the Language and Literature AS/A level. For example it requires the study of set texts (like Literature) and it requires the acquisition and understanding of linguistic frameworks (like Language). This results in a course that makes a wide range of demands on students and teachers (see the Assessment Objectives on p.32). However, it also enables students to make informed choices about the kind of English degree they may wish to pursue as well as equipping them very thoroughly for the full range of available English degrees.

If students are studying English, possibly as a 4th or 5th AS, but are unlikely to pursue it at undergraduate level, this course clearly supports their other studies as well as preparing them for the practical application of communication skills in a wide range of careers.

The understanding of language gained on this course obviously prepares students well for a wide range of English degrees, particularly in the areas of linguistics, creative writing and communication.

16. Subject Criteria for GCE Advanced Language and Literature, QCA, 1999
7.2 The content of the course

At AS level the requirement is that students should be able to use both linguistic and literary-critical concepts and frameworks to comment on both literary and non-literary texts in both spoken and written modes. The purpose is to develop students into ‘independent, confident and reflective readers’. (17) In addition, like English Language students, they have to develop skills as speakers and writers of English.

At A2 (the second year of the course) there is the usual requirement for greater depth and breadth. In addition students are required to compare texts (from different contexts, including different historical periods) and to evaluate the approaches they have used in analysing texts.

Like A Level English Language students, students following the combined English Language and Literature course have to acquire and be able to apply the linguistic framework (see above, under English Language). The linguistic framework can be seen as subsuming literary approaches such as metaphor (as part of lexical choice) or the use of sound (under phonology). However, certain features of literary discourse such as narrative technique and poetic form may be given special attention.

As with English Language A Level, different Awarding Bodies, and to some extent different schools and colleges, tend to use different terminology, so students may not share the same specialist vocabulary even if they have followed the same course.

7.3 Set texts and other texts

English Language and Literature students also have to study four set texts from literary genres (a minimum of two in each year). At AS one of these has to be pre-1900; at A2, the second year, one has to be pre-1770, i.e. pre-Romantic. This means that in terms of experience of a range of periods and genres they cover a similar range of set texts to the English Literature students but instead of studying more examples they have the linguistic framework to inform their independent and/or unseen reading.

As in the A Level English Language course there is no limit to the other kinds of texts that can be read on the course. Examples might include: political speeches; peer group discussions recorded and transcribed by the students themselves; scripted and unscripted language used in film, television and radio; journalistic texts of any period; the text of a strip cartoon.

It is important to understand that all texts studied or analysed on the course, whether literary or non-literary, are read using both linguistic and literary approaches. This crossover can produce some interesting analysis of texts, for example:

– use of narrative strategies and gender representation in a spontaneously told anecdote
– the use of compound sentences in a character’s direct speech in a novel
– the use of rules of conversation (e.g. adjacency pairs) by Shakespeare in Othello.

7.4 The Assessment Objectives

The difficulty in establishing an agreed conceptual framework for this new course has resulted in a large number of Assessment Objectives. There are currently more AOs for English Language and Literature than for any other A Level, though this is likely to be reduced when the changes to A Level are introduced in 2008.

Assessment Objectives

AO1: Communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insights gained from the combined study of literary and linguistic study, using appropriate terminology and accurate written expression.

AO2i: In responding to literary and non-literary texts, distinguish, describe and interpret variation in meaning and form.

AO2ii: Respond with knowledge and understanding to texts of different types and from different periods, exploring and commenting on relationships and comparisons between them.

AO3i: Respond to and analyse texts, using literary and linguistic concepts and approaches.

AO3ii: Use and evaluate different literary and linguistic approaches to the study of written and spoken language, showing how these approaches inform their readings.

AO4: Show understanding of the ways contextual variation and choices of form, style and vocabulary shape the meanings of texts.

AO5: Identify and consider the ways attitudes and values are created and conveyed in speech and writing.

AO6: Demonstrate expertise and accuracy in writing for a variety of specific purposes and audiences, drawing on knowledge of literary texts and features of language to explain and comment on the choices made.

17. Subject Criteria GCE Advanced Language and Literature, QCA
Teachers report finding the current Assessment Objectives difficult to use with students as they seem to overlap. For example, AO4 could appear to deal with context yet, because it links context to ‘choices of form, style and vocabulary’, it seems to duplicate aspects of AO2 and AO3. However, the key underlying concepts can be clarified. AO1 and AO6 deal with the students’ expertise as a user of English Language in relation to what they have learned on the course. The other conceptual areas covered are as outlined here.

i. Using and evaluating linguistic and literary analysis.

ii. Understanding context, including historical and generic contexts.

iii. Interpreting how attitudes and values are conveyed and represented.

As on the English Language course the range of assessed tasks is broad. Specifications differ in the kinds of tasks set, as shown below.

i. A range of writing tasks for different audiences and purposes: this could include anything from writing a Petrarchan sonnet to writing an article for a teen magazine. It also might include editing and re-casting material.

ii. Writing a commentary on a completed writing task, using linguistic and literary analysis linking the task to the knowledge and understanding gained on the course.

iii. Writing essays on set texts using both linguistic and literary approaches judged to be appropriate by the student. Examination essays may be open or closed text, usually requiring detailed textual analysis.

iv. Writing an investigation of language as a result of independent research.

v. Comparing several texts on the same subject, both literary and non-literary, and from different historical periods.

7.5 Example questions on English Language and Literature

These are a sample of the questions set for English Language and Literature since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. They cannot necessarily be used to compare specifications, as they do not represent the full range of question-styled across papers. However, they do give a flavour of the subject at A Level. Many of the questions have been abbreviated, since the rubrics include substantial detail and explanation.

7.5.1 Questions on literary texts

**AQA A Unit 2 Poetic Study**

Explore the ways in which Keats writes about beauty in two or three of his poems.

In your answer you should consider:

* Vocabulary and style
* Imagery and description
* Any other features you consider important

**AQA B Unit 2 The Changing Language of Literature**

Find the extracts from the pair of texts you have studied. Read them through carefully.

Discuss the two extracts commenting on:

* The ideas in each extract and the ways in which they are presented.
* How the writers’ language choices in each extract help to reveal attitudes and values.
* What the language of the two extracts shows us about the changes in language and style over time.
* How far you think each extract reveals ideas, attitudes and values found in each text as a whole.

**WJEC Unit 4 Drama Pre-1770**

Remind yourself of Act 2 Scene 4, lines 200-262 of ‘King Lear’.

a) Explore the dramatic impact of this extract. Look closely at Shakespeare’s literary and linguistic techniques.

b) Looking at the play as a whole, how far is Shakespeare’s presentation of the relationship between Goneril and Regan in this extract typical?

Include in both parts of your response an evaluation of the literary and linguistic approaches that have been most useful to you in answering this question.
Edexcel Unit 5 Wider Reading Section B
Modern Literature

How far do you agree that in ‘Translations’ Friel has successfully ‘used simple and direct language to convey and explore the complexity of language’?

OCR Unit 1 Language in Literature: Poetry and Prose
Chaucer’s ‘The Nun’s Priest’s Tale’

With careful attention to the language and style of the following passage, discuss the use of irony here and elsewhere in the ‘Tale’.

In the course of your answer:
• look closely at the register and tone used by the fox
• discuss the diction and poetic style of this passage
• set out clearly your views on how the tone of this passage relates to the ‘Tale’ as a whole.

7.5.2 Other types of questions

AQA A Unit 3 Section B – The Study of the Language of Speech

Read the extract below. It is a transcript of part of an interview between Jonathan Ross and Pierce Brosnan.

Explore the ways in which the two speakers use language to reveal their feelings in this interview.

In your answer you should comment on:
• the choice of vocabulary and the use of grammatical and stylistic features
• the attitudes and values conveyed by the speakers.

AQA B Unit 5 Talk in Life and Literature

Unseen texts

Text A is a poem written by Henry Reed (1914-1986), inspired by his army experiences during the Second World War.

Text B is part of a transcribed dialogue between a primary school teacher and a 7-year-old boy Colin about how to make a camera tripod.

Compare the two texts in detail, commenting on the ways in which they reflect the nature of talk in real life and the representation of talk in literature.

You should refer in your answer to:
• the significance of context and situation
• how attitudes and values are conveyed
• language functions
• any other relevant matters.

OCR Unit 1 Linking Language and Literature

Passage A is an extract from a short story called ‘Kikmora’ (1979) by Jean Rhys.

Passage B is a transcript of an extract from a recent radio interview in which Hunter Davies interviews the footballer Bobby Charlton about his marriage.

Compare Passage A and Passage B paying particular attention to:
• how the speakers’ vocabulary and expression help to convey their attitudes
• the differences between natural and fictional speech in these extracts.

Edexcel Unit 2 Desk Study

On the basis of reading a range of articles, personal accounts and web pages relating to the topic of homelessness, students are asked to produce:

a. an informative/discursive article entitled ‘Young and homeless’ for readers of ‘The Big Issue’, in response to the magazine’s invitation for contributions from new and talented young journalists

b. a commentary on the article, providing a linguistic analysis.
### 7.5.3 Example coursework tasks set for Language and Literature

1. Analyse how Tennessee Williams uses language and dramatic techniques to explore fantasy and illusion in 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. Make close reference to a short extract of your choice (about 3 pages of text) and show your understanding of fantasy and illusion in the play as a whole. (Approx 1000 words)

2. A comparative analysis of the language of three spoken texts
   - a) 1966 World Cup football commentary
   - b) 2005 football commentary
   - c) conversation about football from the film 'Bend it like Beckham'

3. A comparative analysis of the following texts:
   - a) Gloria Steinem’s address to the National Women’s Political Caucus (1971)
   - b) Maya Angelou interviewed for the History Channel (2004)
   - c) Sojourner Truth’s ‘Ain’t I a Woman?’ speech (1851)

Many issues concerning the freedom of students to choose their texts and topics in relation to coursework are the same here as for the English Literature course. However, coursework tasks that involve the investigation of language are almost always defined by the student themselves, frequently drawing on knowledge, experience and interests from outside their English Language and Literature A Level. Such tasks encourage and develop students’ independent research skills.

### 7.6 Classroom approaches and pedagogy

#### 7.6.1 Teaching time allocated

According to the EMC survey, teaching time allocated to English Language and Literature varies less than for Literature, ranging from four 65-minute lessons (260 minutes) to six 1-hour lessons (360 minutes) plus a further 10 hours additional support timetabled over the course of a year.

With the introduction of Curriculum 2000, the very nature of English Language and Literature as an Advanced Level subject changed: where previously it had been formed from units taken from the English Literature and English Language syllabuses, the Curriculum 2000 reforms required it exist as a discrete subject, with its own Subject Criteria and Assessment Objectives. Given this shift it is somewhat surprising that in the EMC Survey several teachers recorded separately the time allocated to Language teaching and Literature teaching. While particular modules are inflected more towards literary or linguistic approaches, a continued perception of the subject as two discrete sections rather than as fully integrated, suggests not all students are benefitting from the strengths of the combined subject.

#### 7.6.2 Texts

According to the EMC survey teacher enjoyment of a text, their feeling of expertise, accessibility and appeal to students are the main factors influencing English Language and Literature teachers’ choice of texts, with equal opportunities issues (related to gender and ethnicity), the availability of resources and each text’s contribution to the overall balance of the course also being significant (see Fig.21).

Where English Literature teachers tend to spend a term on each text, the majority of English Language and Literature teachers surveyed spend only half a term. There is, however, a far wider range of times spent in the teaching of any one text (from less than half a term to more than a term and a half). This may be because some teachers are integrating language study into the study of the text or are introducing linguistic concepts and frameworks in parallel with textual study.

The majority of teachers (63.2%) expect the students to read the text independently, with 84.2% reading at least key passages in class. A number of teachers commented...
that although this is their aim, many students are unwilling or unable to read the text independently. Several teachers indicated that poems and plays are often read in their entirety in class.

In English Language and Literature, students experience a huge range of texts, especially non-literary ones. In terms of literary texts, they receive a lot of encouragement to read widely in the form of reading lists, general encouragement, and book clubs; however, the general feeling seems to be that students actually do very little independent reading with many students struggling even to read their set texts.

Several teachers take a more structured approach to wider reading, focusing it around the texts studied in class. Related texts and other texts by the same author, critical extracts, articles, Bible stories, myths, legends, Shakespeare story versions (all to help with literary allusions) are all read alongside the set texts. Some schools run a range of enrichment courses on wider reading linked to their Advanced Extension Award provision. Despite the fact that ‘texts’ for English Language and Literature could be in any form or genre, all examples of wider reading given by teachers completing the survey were either fiction or background material to specific texts.

7.6.3 Teaching approaches and strategies
The EMC survey asked teachers to spell out what is different about teaching a literary text for A Level English Language and Literature in comparison with English Literature. The vast majority of teachers highlighted several significant areas of difference. These can be summarised as follows:

- closer focus on grammar
- emphasis on linguistic approaches/frameworks/terms
- close stylistic and semantic analysis of key passages
- less focus on theme
- greater focus on spoken language in literary texts
- no critics
- a greater focus on specific AOs at the expense of exploring texts in an holistic way or from an overarching perspective.

There is a growing belief that English Literature teachers worry that linguistic analysis can occur in isolation from meaning, despite the fact that the specifications insist on the importance of linking linguistic study to the interpretation of texts. In best practice, meaning and analysis go hand in hand.

Responses to the question ‘Which teaching approaches do you use often, sometimes, rarely, never’ suggest that many teachers employ the same or similar teaching strategies in order to teach English Language and Literature as they do English Literature: close analysis, discussion, exam practice are as relevant and fundamental to the teaching and learning in English Language and Literature classrooms as they are in English Literature ones. One difference might be the use of a textbook or extracts from textbooks and websites, to support the study of language.

Discussion with and without questions is the most popular teaching approach with 68.4% of teachers surveyed ‘often’ using whole class discussion with questions. Reading texts in class was a more commonly used approach (52.6%) than all other strategies with the exception of discussion. As might be expected given it is an assessed element of the course, creative/re-creative writing is used more frequently by English Language and Literature teachers than by those teaching English Literature with 52.6% using it ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’. More English Language and Literature teachers (42.1%) use drama approaches than those teaching English Literature. Although used ‘often’ by two teachers, ‘teacher lecture’ was ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ used by 52.6% of teachers; while it may not be appropriate to use as the main strategy for teaching A Level students, it does suggest that first year undergraduates may have had no experience of one of the main teaching methods in higher education.

English Language and Literature teachers use a wide range of approaches to support students in their writing. As with English Literature teachers, feedback on drafts is the most common form of support given (63.2%), with more than half using bullet point support and explicit teaching of essay conventions. English Language and Literature teachers use modelled writing as a form of support more often than English Literature teachers (52.6% use it ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ and for 15.8% this is the approach they use ‘most often’). It may be that there is less expectation that students will already know how to write an essay appropriate for English Language and Literature or that there is a perception amongst teachers that English Language and Literature students require more support.
Perhaps because of the perceived need for support and clamour from teachers, published resources tailor-made for English Language or English Language and Literature are plentiful and often of high quality. Series like the Routledge Intertext Series are written by teachers and academics to meet the needs of A Level students and teachers, offering practical classroom approaches on key topics. For English Literature there are probably more ‘study guides’ directed at A Level students, providing commentaries on texts but less in the way of classroom material and support for teaching. The English and Media Centre, NATE and Philip Allan Updates are among the few publishers producing much material for the A Level classroom. For English Literature teachers, the vast wealth of material available is not always readily accessible or available in a form that they can easily adapt for use in A Level classrooms.

There are two print magazines targeted specifically at A Level students: emagazine and The English Review. In both cases, teachers who buy an institutional copy can then offer students the opportunity to buy their own copies at a much reduced rate. While The English Review focuses mainly on Literature, emagazine has articles on both Language and Literature and a subscription website with an archive of past issues. Both publications include articles by academics and this has proved to be an excellent way of introducing students to high quality critical writing.

Several organisations (such as Cambridge University’s Masterclass days, Philip Allan Updates, and Poetry Live!) hold study days for A Level students.
The Advanced Extension Award, or AEA, was introduced in 2002 for the most able students studying English Language, English Literature, and English Language and Literature. Guidelines suggest that it is for the top 10% of A Level candidates. It was conceived as an Award that students could take without extra teaching, so as not to disadvantage students in schools or colleges that could not offer special provision for it. In practice, some institutions link it to ‘enrichment’ programmes (possibly funded through ‘Aim Higher’), literary societies and other such additional activities to extend their A Level offer.

The QCA Criteria for an AEA in English state that it should encourage students to: acquire greater skills of enquiry, analysis and synthesis within the three English disciplines:

i. write with precision and conviction.
ii. sustain their interest and enjoyment of literary and/or linguistic study.
iii. engage intelligently and creatively with a wide selection of unseen texts, regardless of the Advanced English specification/s being followed
iv. work with insight and originality on tasks that move beyond those of the Advanced English synoptic modules.

The AEA in English assesses candidates’ ability to:

i. understand and analyse texts of different types and periods using appropriate conceptual frameworks.
ii. understand and evaluate the ways in which contextual variation and choices of form, style and vocabulary shape the meanings of texts.
iii. generate and synthesise insights and apply knowledge gained from Advanced specification content.
iv. articulate independent opinions and judgements on the significance of texts, informed by knowledge of other approaches to interpretation and analysis.
v. write precisely and with some originality in response to tasks set.

There is only one Assessment Objective for the AEA:
The AEA in English will assess candidates’ abilities to apply and communicate effectively their knowledge and understanding of English, some of its methodologies and texts, using the skills of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

The AEA is assessed by a three-hour written examination, where students answer two equally weighted questions from a choice of six, based on a collection of textual material typically comprising: unfamiliar primary texts from different genres and periods, drawn from spoken and written language, and selected to facilitate comparisons and connections; some secondary texts linked to the primary reading material by, for example, authorship, context, or specific commentary, and which raise issues of literary or linguistic debate relevant to the interpretation of the primary texts; other secondary materials which demonstrate a range of critical views, theoretical positions and analytical approaches which have the potential to illuminate and challenge ways of reading the package as a whole.

The tasks set or routes through the material should enable candidates to draw on either literary or linguistic studies or a combination of both. Where appropriate to the textual material, question styles may include opportunities for candidates to produce their own imaginative or re-creative writing.

The AEA is set and administered by just one awarding body, OCR, on behalf of all the Awarding Bodies. Awards are made on a two-point scale: Merit and Distinction.

From Summer 2006 points will be added to candidates’ UCAS tariff for success in the AEA: 40 points for a Distinction and 20 points for a Merit. It is difficult to see how these points could usefully be included in any offer by an HE institution as, currently, the availability of the AEA award to students is so variable: some schools and colleges do not offer it at all and in many it is unclear who will be an appropriate candidate until quite late in the A2 year.

Responses to the AEA have included:

i. praise for the scope it offers able students to respond to material in imaginative and open-ended way
ii. concern about whether the choice of texts and tasks has been equally appropriate across the three Englishes and whether English Language students have been disadvantaged as a result
iii. mixed views about whether such an open form of assessment could beneficially be applied to Advanced Level study in general
iv. recognition that working towards the AEA, especially if teaching time can be allocated to it, provides an excellent bridge between Advanced Level and undergraduate study.
As the table (Fig.22) shows, English (combined) has the highest number of students sitting AEA of all these key A Level subjects. However, as a percentage of the total subject entries, a number of subjects have a higher proportion of students entering the AEA.

Fig.22  Selected subjects AEA entries 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>A Level Subject entries</th>
<th>AEA entries for each A Level subject</th>
<th>AEA entries as a % of subject entries</th>
<th>AEA entries by subject expressed as a % of total A Level entries (all subjects combined: 766247)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (combined)</td>
<td>81469</td>
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<td>357</td>
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<td>0.049</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
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<td>Maths</td>
<td>52788</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. QCA Subject Criteria – Knowledge, Understanding and Skills for English Specifications

10.1 English Literature

Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

AS specifications should require candidates to show knowledge and understanding of:

• a minimum of four texts covering prose, poetry and drama. These should include a play by Shakespeare and at least one other text published before 1900. The texts read should be of sufficient substance and quality to merit serious consideration, and should have been originally written in English.

• how texts relate to the contexts in which they were written.

• the different ways in which texts are interpreted by different readers, acknowledging that literary texts have a range of meanings and the significance of these is related to readers’ knowledge, experience and ideas.

In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to show knowledge and understanding of:

• a minimum of four further texts, covering prose, poetry and drama. At least one work should have been published before 1770 (pre-Romantic), and at least one other before 1900. The texts read should be of sufficient substance and quality to merit serious consideration, and should have been written originally in English.

• how texts relate to the contexts in which they were written.

• the ways in which meanings are constructed and interpreted in speech and writing (semantics and pragmatics).

b. variations in language according to mode (speech or writing) and context, including the role of personal and social factors in influencing meanings and forms.

In addition, A Level specifications should require candidates to show deeper knowledge and understanding of:

a. frameworks for the systematic study of language, including phonology and phonetics, lexis, morphology, grammar and semantics.

b. the application and usefulness of different linguistic frameworks for the description and analysis of speech and writing.

c. how historical and geographical variation shape and change meanings and forms in language.

AS and A level specifications should require candidates to:

• apply linguistic concepts and frameworks appropriately and systematically in the study of language.

• describe, explain and interpret variation in both spoken and written language.

• demonstrate appropriate and accurate control of spoken and written English for a variety of audiences and purposes.

• comment on the production, interpretation, adaptation and representation of texts.

In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to:

• analyse and evaluate variation in written and spoken language, including language from the past.

• make connections between their knowledge and understanding of concepts and frameworks for the study of language and evaluate the suitability of these as tools for analysis of language in use.

In all AS and A level specifications, the texts and language samples studied must be of sufficient substance and challenge to merit serious consideration.

10.2 English Language

Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

AS specifications should require candidates to show broad knowledge and understanding of:

a. key features of frameworks for the systematic study of the English Language at different levels of analysis, including:

• the characteristic speech sounds and intonation patterns (phonetics and phonology).

• the vocabulary of English, including the origins, meanings and usage of words (lexis).

• the forms and structures of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts in speech and writing (grammar).

b. the ways meanings are constructed and interpreted in speech and writing (semantics and pragmatics).

In all AS and A level specifications, the texts and language samples studied must be of sufficient substance and challenge to merit serious consideration.
10.3 English Language and Literature

Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

AS specifications should require candidates to show knowledge and understanding of:

- a range of literary and non-literary texts, including a minimum of two texts from two literary genres (prose, poetry and drama), one of which must have been published before 1900. The non-literary texts should include both spoken and written language.
- literary-critical concepts and terminology relating to genre, structure and style.
- linguistic concepts and key features of frameworks for the study of spoken and written language at different levels of analysis, relating to speech sounds and intonation patterns, the origins and development of words, the rules and conventions of grammar, and ways of constructing and interpreting meaning in English.
- how variations in language can shape and change meanings and forms.

In addition, A Level specifications should require candidates to show deeper knowledge and understanding of:

- a wider range of literary and non-literary texts, including two additional literary texts, one of which must have been published before 1770 (pre-Romantic), and selected to ensure coverage of the major literary forms of poetry, prose and drama during the AS and A level course. The selection of additional non-literary texts must include both spoken and written language.
- some of the ways in which meanings and forms in language are shaped by variations in mode, use, time or place.
- the ways in which spoken language and written texts relate to the contexts in which they were received and created.

AS specifications should require candidates to:

- show their understanding and evaluation of spoken language and written texts in fluent and convincing responses.
- apply linguistic and literary-critical concepts and analytical frameworks for the study of spoken language and written texts.
- identify and consider how meanings and effect are created and conveyed in texts.
- demonstrate appropriate and accurate control of English for a variety of audiences and purposes, and comment on the production, interpretation, adaptation or representation of texts.

In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to:

- compare texts, evaluating the appropriateness of different analytical approaches to their study, taking account of the cultural and historical factors which influenced them.
- demonstrate their knowledge of the ways in which the study of language and literature inform each other through the analysis and interpretation of literary and non-literary texts.

All AS and A level specifications in English Language and Literature must ensure that the combination of texts studied and tasks set on them provide sufficient challenge to merit serious consideration.

AS specifications should require candidates to:

- read, analyse and communicate accurately and effectively their knowledge, understanding and judgement of texts.
- understand, respond to and evaluate how writers use form, structure and language to shape meanings.
- produce fluent and convincing responses demonstrating close and detailed reading of texts.
- identify and consider how attitudes and values are created and conveyed in texts.
- make appropriate use of literary critical concepts and terminology.

In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to:

- make comparisons between substantial whole texts in order to understand and comment on what they have in common and on significant differences between them.
- synthesise their knowledge and understanding of the styles, contexts and meanings of literary texts.
Abse, D: Welsh Retrospective
Achebe, C: Things Fall Apart
Albee, E: Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf
Atwood, M: Alias Grace
Atwood, M: Oryx and Crake
Atwood, M: The Handmaid's Tale
Auden, WH: Poems
Austen, J: Emma
Austen, J: Persuasion
Austen, J: Pride & Prejudice
Banks, I: The Wasp Factory
Barker, P: Regeneration
Barnes, J: England England
Barnes, J: The History of the World in 10\%2F2 Chapters
Behn, A: The Rover
Betjeman, J: Best of
Blake, W: Songs
Boland, E: Poems
Bond, E: Saved
Brinsley, R: School for Scandal
Brontë, A: The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
Brontë, C: Jane Eyre
Brontë, E: Wuthering Heights
Brontës: Poems
Browning, R: Poems
Byatt, AS: Possession
Byron: Don Juan cantos 1-4
Byron: Poems
Carey, P: The True History of the Kelly Gang
Carter, A: Wise Children
Carver, R: Short Cuts
Chaucer, G: The Franklin’s Tale
Chaucer, G: The Merchant’s Tale
Chaucer, G: The Miller’s Tale
Chaucer, G: The Nun’s Priest’s Tale
Chaucer, G: The Wife of Bath’s Tale
Chopin, K: The Awakening & Selected Stories
Churchill, C: Top Girls
Clarke, G: Letter from a Far Country
Coleridge, ST: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
Congreve, W: The Way of the World
Conrad, J: The Heart of Darkness
De Bernieres, L: Captain Corelli’s Mandolin
Dickens, C: Great Expectations
Dickens, C: Hard Times
Dickinson, E: Poems
Diski, J: Skating to Antarctica
Donne, J: Poems
Duffy, CA: The World’s Wife
Edexcel Anthology
Eight Metaphysical Poets
Eliot, G: The Mill on the Floss
Eliot, TS: Poems
Farquar, G: The Recruiting Officer
Farrell, JG: The Siege of Krishnapur
Fitzgerald, F Scott: Tender is the Night
Fitzgerald, F Scott: The Great Gatsby
Ford, J: Tis Pity She’s a Whore
Forster, EM: A Passage to India
Forster, EM: A Room with a View
Forster, EM: Howard’s End
Fowles, J: French Lieutenant’s Woman
Frayn, M: Spies
Frazier, C: Cold Mountain
Friel, B: Making History
Friel, B: Translations
Gaskell, E: Mary Barton
Gaskell, E: North and South
Gay, J: The Beggar’s Opera
Gibbons, S: Cold Comfort Farm
Golding, W: The Spire
Goldsmith, G: She Stoops to Conquer
Griffiths, T: Comedians
Hardy, T: Poems
Hardy, T: The Mayor of Casterbridge
Hardy, T: The Return of the Native
Harrison, T: Poems
Heaney, S: Beowulf
Heaney, S: New Selected Poems
Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry
Herbert G: Poems
Hoban, R: Riddley Walker
Hopkins, GM: Poems
Housman, AE: A Shropshire Lad
Hughes, T: Poems
Humphreys, E: A Toy Epic
Ishiguro, K: The Remains of the Day
James, H: Washington Square
Jonson, B: The Alchemist
Keats, J: Poems
Kesey, K: One Flew Over Cuckoo’s Nest
11. List of texts set for English Literature 2007

Larkin, P: High Windows
Larkin, P: Whitsun Weddings
Le Guin, U: The Left Hand of Darkness
Marlowe, C: Dr Faustus
Marlowe, C: Edward II
McCabe, P: The Dead School
McEwan, I: Atonement
McEwan, I: Enduring Love
Metaphysical Poets
Middleton, T and Rowley, W: The Changeling
Miller, A: All My Sons
Milton, J: Paradise Lost (Bks 1 & 2)
Milton, J: Paradise Lost Bks (9 & 10)
Murdock, I: The Bell
Ngugi: Petals of Blood
Orwell, G: 1984
Osborne, J: Look Back in Anger
Penguin Book of American Verse
Plath, S: The Bell Jar
Pope, A: Selected Poems
Pope, A: The Rope of the Lock
Proulx, A: Postcards
Rossetti, C: Poems
Roy, A: The God of Small Things
Schaffer, P: Amadeus
Shakespeare, W: Antony and Cleopatra
Shakespeare, W: As You Like It
Shakespeare, W: Complete Sonnets
Shakespeare, W: Hamlet
Shakespeare, W: Henry IV (part 2)
Shakespeare, W: Henry V
Shakespeare, W: King Lear
Shakespeare, W: Measure for Measure
Shakespeare, W: Merry Wives of Windsor
Shakespeare, W: Much Ado About Nothing
Shakespeare, W: Othello
Shakespeare, W: Richard II
Shakespeare, W: Richard III
Shakespeare, W: The Merchant of Venice
Shakespeare, W: The Tempest
Shakespeare, W: The Winter's Tale
Shaw, G.B: Mrs Warren's Profession
Shelley, M: Frankenstein
Sheridan, B.W: The Rivals
Shields, C: Larry's Party
Smith, Z: White Teeth
Steinbeck, J: Travels with Charley
Stevenson, A: Granny Scarcroft
Stoker, B: Dracula
Stoppard, T: Professional Foul
Stoppard, T: Rosencrantz and Guil dernstern
Swift, G: Waterland
Tennyson, Alfred Lord: Poems
Thomas, D: Selected Poems
Thomas, E: Poems
Walcott, D: Selected poems
Walcott, D: The Odyssey
Walker, A: The Color Purple
Webb, M: Precious Bane
Webster, J: The Duchess of Malfi
Webster, J: The White Devil
Wertenbaker, T: Our Country's Good
White, A: Beyond the Glass
Wilde, O: A Woman of No Importance
Wilde, O: Lady Windermere's Fan
Wilde, O: The Picture of Dorian Gray
Williams, T: A Streetcar Named Desire
Williams, T: Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Wordsworth, W: The Prelude (Bks 1 & 2)
Wordsworth, W: The Prelude (Bks 9 and 10)
Yeats, W.B: Selected Poems
### 12. Literature – Outline of Modules

#### Unit 1 (AS)
- **AQA spec A (from 2007)**
  - The modern novel
    - Closed book exam
    - Intro to detailed study of one novel. Answer one question from choice of two on one of the set novels.
- **AQA spec B (from 2007)**
  - Introduction to study of lit.
    - Open book exam
    - Intro to critical assessment of 1 prose text. Answer 1 question on each text – printed poem/extract to be explored in context of whole text.
- **OCR (2005 on)**
  - Drama: Shakespeare
    - Closed book exam: Choice of set text
    - A: Passage based question in relation to whole work with bullet points for guidance – 1 compulsory question on each text. (How form, structure, language create meaning/prompts possible responses from an audience)
    - B: Answer on same text. Choice of 2 questions on each text. Guidance on suggested lines of approach (interpretations & contexts).
- **Edexcel**
  - Drama & poetry
    - Open book exam
    - At least 1 text must be pre-1900. Choice of 2 questions on each text: – 1 question identifies passage/poem – 1 question requires candidates to select an appropriate text
    - Emphasis on critical understanding of text & ability to select appropriate textual evidence for comment and analysis in relation to the text as a whole.
- **WJEC (2007)**
  - Shakespeare
    - Closed book exam
    - 1 question in 2 parts
    - A: passage based, focusing on form, structure and language
    - B: Poetry question format as for A in both cases requires knowledge of the text as a whole.

#### Unit 2 (AS)
- **Shakespeare**
  - Cwk or open book exam
  - One Shakespeare play not set for Unit 4 or studied at KS3 or 4
- **Genre study: Poetry (pre 20th C) & drama (20th C)**
  - Open book exam
  - Poetry: Knowledge & understanding of texts: how choice of form, structure & language affects meaning. Study 1 text compulsory question on each text – printed poem/extract to be explored in context of whole text.
  - Drama: Knowledge & understanding of texts: Choice of question on each text.

#### Unit 3 (AS)
- **Texts in context: Drama & poetry**
  - Cwk – study of 1+ Shakespeare plays
  - Open book exam
  - 2 texts studied (1 poetry, 1 drama), 1 of which pre-1900. Emphasis on context of reader and writer and how interpretations change through time.
- **Literature complementary study**
  - Cwk: No exam option
  - Folder of 2 items of written work (total 150-2000, max 3000) discussing text of choice (written in English, not a set text):
    1. Text as a whole
    2. Close reading and criticism of a selected passage. May take the form of a recreative piece with commentary.

#### Pre 1900 prose
- **Cwk or open book exam**
  - Exam: question format as above
  - Cwk folder: either 1x1500 or 2x750, of which one can be personal composition + commentary of 1000 words.
  - No free choice of text for coursework.

#### 20th C poetry & pre 1900 prose
- **Cwk or open book exam**
  - Exam: question format as above
  - Focus respond to literary texts of different types and periods; how form, structure and language shape meaning.
## 12. Outline Specifications

### 12.1 Literature – Outline of Modules (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Exam Format</th>
<th>Texts &amp; Drama (pre-1900)</th>
<th>Poetry &amp; Drama (pre-1900)</th>
<th>Modern Drama</th>
<th>Prose &amp; Drama (post 1914)</th>
<th>Poetry &amp; Drama (pre-1900)</th>
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<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The modern novel</strong></td>
<td>The Spirit; Cold Mountain; Wise Children; Spies; Possession</td>
<td>Introduction to study of lit.</td>
<td>Drama: Shakespeare</td>
<td>Drama and poetry</td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
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<td>Pride &amp; Prejudice; Tess; Great Expectations; The Color Purple; The Great Gatsby; The God of Small Things; Waterland</td>
<td>Henry V (part 2); As You Like It; The Tempest; Antony and Cleopatra</td>
<td>The Rover; Translations; Top Girls; A Streetcar Named Desire; Professional Fool</td>
<td>King Lear; Measure for Measure; Richard II; Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2 (AS)</strong></td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Genre study: Poetry &amp; drama</td>
<td>Poetry and prose</td>
<td>Pre 1900 prose</td>
<td>Choice of texts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cwk: any play not set</td>
<td>Poetry: Miller's Tale; Donne; Paradise Lost Blk 1; Blake; Songs; Keats</td>
<td>Poetry: Franklin's Tale; Shakespeare; Complete Sonnets; Browning; Byron; Anne Stevenson – Granny Scarecrow; TS Eliot; Edward Thomas; Tony Harrison</td>
<td>The Return of the Native; Frankenstein; Emma; Hard Times; Washington Square</td>
<td>Regeneration; Translations; A Toy Epic; Death of a Salesman; Dylan Thomas Selected Poems; Yeats - Selected Poems</td>
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<td>Exam: The Tempest; Richard III; Much Ado</td>
<td>Drama: Death of a Salesman; Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; Rosenkranz and Guildenstern; Look Back in Anger; Top Girls; Amadeus</td>
<td>Prose: Persuasion; Jane Eyre; Mary Barton; Dracula; Carver - Short Cuts; A Passage to India; Heart of Darkness; History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters</td>
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<td>Cwk centres choose own text but these must be approved</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 3 (AS)</strong></td>
<td>Texts in context: Drama &amp; poetry (1 must be pre 1900)</td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Literature complementary study</td>
<td>Shakespeare in context</td>
<td>20th C poetry &amp; pre 1900 prose</td>
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<td>Drama: School for Scandal; Tit For Tat; She's a Whore; A Woman of No Importance; All My Sons; Comedians; Making History</td>
<td>Free choice. Either one piece of work approx 1500-2000 words or two pieces of 750-1000 words each (Not Measure for Measure if chosen for Unit 5)</td>
<td>Cwk</td>
<td>Henry V; Anthony and Cleopatra; The Winter's Tale; Much Ado About Nothing; Hamlet</td>
<td>Poetry: Abuse - Welsh retrospective; Boland; Duffy; Heaney; Hughes Prose: Emma; The Awakening &amp; Selected Stories; Mill on the Floss; Mayer of Casterbridge; Picture of Dorian Gray</td>
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<td>Poetry: The Miller's Tale; Hardy; Bronte; Larkin - High Windows; Heaney - Beowulf; Duffy - Worlds Wife</td>
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<td>2 items of written work discussing a text of choice not on any set text; list; one item should focus on the text as a whole (AOs 1, 4 and 5); another should involve close reading and critical discussion (AOS 3, 3.1500-2000 words, max 3000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 4 (AS)</strong></td>
<td>Texts in time</td>
<td>Comparing texts</td>
<td>Poetry &amp; drama (pre 1900) from 2006</td>
<td>Modern prose</td>
<td>Poetry pre-1900</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Drama pre-1770; Hamlet; Measure for Measure; Winter's Tale; Edward II; The White Devil; The Alchemist</td>
<td>Centre choose one prose text + one other text – prose, poetry or drama. If prose it must be of a diff type of period to the first</td>
<td>Merchant; Herbert; Paradise Lost 9 &amp; 10; Blake; Hopkins; Hamlet; Dryden; Measure for Measure; The Changeling; The Rover; The Beggar's Opera; Mrs Warren's Profession</td>
<td>Captain; Goretti's Mandolin; Alix Grace; The Bell-Howard's End; Things Fall Apart</td>
<td>Mur's Priest's Tale; Dickinson; Metaphysical Poets; Keats; Paradise Lost (Blis 1 &amp; 2); Rossetti</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pre-1900 Poetry: The Prelude 9 a &amp; 10; Blake – Songs; Don Juan cantos 1-4</td>
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### Unit 5 (AS)

**Literary connections**
- Choice of Cwk (2 texts, 1 prose) or exam (1 option from one of set areas) Lit themes
- History in Lit (The Siege of Krishnapur and True History Kelly Gang) or Women's perspectives (The Left Hand of Darkness and Orx and Craile) Time and place
- Visions of the future (Riddley Walker and Clockwork Orange) or Perspectives on 19th C England (French Lieutenant's Woman) and Tuss
- Ways of telling Reflections (Precious Bane and Cold Comfort Farm) or Minds under stress (The Bell Jar and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest)

**Set texts:** drama pre-1770; Poetry pre-1900
- Poetry pre-1900: Wife of Bath, Hopkins; Rape of the Lock; Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Tennyson; Emily Dickinson
- Drama pre-1770: Edward II; Measure for Measure; The Changeling; She Stoops to Conquer; The Rover; The Winter's Tale

**Prose post 1914**
- Cwk folder (max 3000 words) with either 2 items of writing or an extended essay on one or more post-1914 texts. Texts can be selected from the list set for the exam version of this module. At least one prose text (fiction or non-fiction)
- Exam (2006 onwards): Cold Comfort Farm; Atonement; Rites of Passage; Open Secrets; A 1000 Acres; To the Lighthouse; Letter to Daniel; An Evil Cradling

**Set texts: drama pre-1770; Poetry pre-1900**
- Poetry: Wife of Bath; Hopkins; The Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Tennyson; Emily Dickinson
- Drama: Edward II; Measure for Measure; The Changeling; She Stoops to Conquer; The Rover; The Winter's Tale

**Prose post 1914**
- Cwk: centres choose own text but these must be approved

### Unit 6 (AS)

**Reading for meaning**
- World War 1 Literature
- Unseen prose, poetry, drama, non-fiction as well as pre and post 1900 lit.
- A reading list is available

**Exploring texts**
- Synoptic
- Pre-release material and unseen material on the question paper:

**Comparative and contextual study 2006**
- In each option choose one of the set texts plus one other as a comparison
- Satire (Pope Selected poems or Barnes England England)
- The Gothic tradition (Frankenstein or The Dead School)
- 20th C American prose (Tender is the Night or Pastoral)
- Post-colonial lit (Walcott Selected poems or White Teeth)
- Post-1945 drama (Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf and The Homecoming)

**Criticism and comparison**
- Choose 1 option group, study 1 named text + 1 of the others listed
- Comic perspective: Pride and Prejudice + Emma or Lenny's Party
- Tragic perspective: Wuthering Heights + Return of the Native or Metaphysical Poets: The Rape of the Lock
- Broken communications: The Tempest + Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf or Translations
- Nature and the imagination: The Prelude Bks 1 & 2 + Exits or Edward Thomas
- Social observer: Blake Songs + Betjeman Best of or Auden

**Drama pre-1770**
- Tis Pity She's a Whore; Dr Faustus; The Changeling; The Duchess of Malfi

### 12. Lit Spec Outline of Texts (cont'd)

**AQA spec A (from 2007)**

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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Set texts:</strong> drama pre-1770; Poetry pre-1900</td>
<td>Poetry pre-1900: Wife of Bath, Hopkins; Rape of the Lock; Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Tennyson; Emily Dickinson</td>
<td>Poetry and drama (open text)</td>
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<td>Drama pre-1770: Edward II; Measure for Measure; The Changeling; She Stoops to Conquer; The Rover; The Winter's Tale</td>
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<td>Candidates study 1 text from either A or B and one text from either C or D</td>
<td>Candidates study 1 text from either A or B and one text from either C or D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prose post 1914: Cwk folder (max 3000 words) with either 2 items of writing or an extended essay on one or more post-1914 texts. Texts can be selected from the list set for the exam version of this module. At least one prose text (fiction or non-fiction)</td>
<td>Exam (2006 onwards): Cold Comfort Farm; Atonement; Rites of Passage; Open Secrets; A 1000 Acres; To the Lighthouse; Letter to Daniel; An Evil Cradling</td>
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<td>Drama pre-1770: Edward II; Measure for Measure; The Changeling; She Stoops to Conquer; The Rover; The Winter's Tale</td>
<td>Poetry and drama (open text)</td>
<td>Candidates study 1 text from either A or B and one text from either C or D</td>
<td>Candidates study 1 text from either A or B and one text from either C or D</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison between 2 texts</strong></td>
<td>Exam: Skating to Antarctica and Travels with Charley; The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and The French Lieutenant's Woman; The Bell Jar and Beyond the Glass (Antonia White); A Room with a View and The Remains of the Day; The Handmaid's Tale and 1984: The Wasp Factory and Saved</td>
<td>Cwk centres choose own text but these must be approved</td>
<td>Cwk centres choose own text but these must be approved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Set texts: drama pre-1770; Poetry pre-1900**
- Poetry: Wife of Bath; Hopkins; The Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Tennyson; Emily Dickinson
- Drama: Edward II; Measure for Measure; The Changeling; She Stoops to Conquer; The Rover; The Winter's Tale

**Prose post 1914**
- Cwk: centres choose own text but these must be approved

**Comparison between 2 texts**
- Exam: Skating to Antarctica and Travels with Charley; The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and The French Lieutenant's Woman; The Bell Jar and Beyond the Glass (Antonia White); A Room with a View and The Remains of the Day; The Handmaid's Tale and 1984: The Wasp Factory and Saved
- Cwk centres choose own text but these must be approved
## 12. Outline Specifications

### 12.3 Language – Outline of Modules

(Note: Cwk = coursework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frameworks for the Description of English Language and Social Contexts</th>
<th>Textual Commentary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AQA spec A (from 2007)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OCR</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQA spec B (from 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edexcel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unit 1 (AS)**

**AQA spec A**

- **Discovering Language**
  - Introduction to the Study of Language
  - Using Language
  - Language and social contexts

- **AQA spec B**
  - Introduction to the Study of Language
  - Using Language
  - Language and social contexts

- **OCR**
  - Introduction to the Study of Language
  - Using Language
  - Language and social contexts

- **Edexcel**
  - Introduction to the Study of Language
  - Using Language
  - Language and social contexts

**Unit 2 (AS)**

**AQA spec A**

- **Language**
  - Using Language

- **AQA spec B**
  - Language
  - Using Language

- **OCR**
  - Language
  - Using Language

- **Edexcel**
  - Language
  - Using Language

**Unit 3 (AS)**

**AQA spec A**

- **Language**
  - Language
  - Using Language

- **AQA spec B**
  - Language
  - Using Language

- **OCR**
  - Language
  - Using Language

- **Edexcel**
  - Language
  - Using Language

**Exam Specification**

- **AQA**
  - Language analysis
  - Own writing
  - Commentary on language production
  - Language production

- **OCR**
  - Language analysis
  - Own writing
  - Commentary on language production
  - Language production

- **Edexcel**
  - Language analysis
  - Own writing
  - Commentary on language production
  - Language production

**Experiments in Writing**

- **AQA**
  - Focus: writing for a variety of purposes & audiences
  - Writing can be creative, adaptive, may involve imitation

- **OCR**
  - Focus: writing for a variety of purposes & audiences
  - Writing can be creative, adaptive, may involve imitation

- **Edexcel**
  - Focus: writing for a variety of purposes & audiences
  - Writing can be creative, adaptive, may involve imitation

**The Language of the Media**

- **AQA**
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language of the media
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language of the media

- **OCR**
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language of the media
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language of the media

- **Edexcel**
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language of the media
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language of the media

**Language & Technology**

- **AQA**
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language & technology
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language & technology

- **OCR**
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language & technology
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language & technology

- **Edexcel**
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language & technology
  - Knowledge & understanding of the language & technology
### 12. Outline Specifications

#### 12.3 Language – Outline of Modules (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 4 (A2)</th>
<th>Language Investigative Projects 2000 words</th>
<th>B: Social contexts (Lang change, original &amp; independent lang re-searchers. Show ability to respond to or research lang questions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Focuses on transcript of natural written language – transpose content for speaking – analyse &amp; account for key features of material &amp; evaluate how context has influenced use. Answer 1 out of 4 essay-style questions. Students will need to be able to discuss &amp; explore concepts &amp; issues they have undertaken in other units.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C: spoken – adaptation, re-writing of material in various ways, writing in response to given material – with commentary on choices and changes made. Assess ability to synthesise knowledge &amp; present it in appropriate form. Answer 1 out of 2 questions.</td>
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| Unit 5 (A2) | Language Topics – questions on knowledge about Lang & issues in Lang development. B: Language variation and change – choice of 2 questions (data stimulus or essay cue or a mixture) |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A: Focuses on transcript of natural written language – transpose content for speaking – analyse & account for key features of material & evaluate how context has influenced use. Answer 1 out of 4 essay-style questions. Students will need to be able to discuss & explore concepts & issues they have undertaken in other units. |
| B: Language topics – questions on knowledge about Lang & issues in Lang debates. B: Language variation and change – choice of 2 questions (data stimulus or essay cue or a mixture) |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Unit 6 (A2)</th>
<th>Exploring, analysing &amp; evaluating Language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Focuses on transcript of natural written language – transpose content for speaking – analyse &amp; account for key features of material &amp; evaluate how context has influenced use. Answer 1 out of 4 essay-style questions. Students will need to be able to discuss &amp; explore concepts &amp; issues they have undertaken in other units.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B: Language topics – questions on knowledge about Lang &amp; issues in Lang debates. B: Language variation and change – choice of 2 questions (data stimulus or essay cue or a mixture)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCR AQA: spec B from 2007</th>
<th>Investigating Language 2000 words</th>
<th>B: Social contexts (Lang change, original &amp; independent lang re-searchers. Show ability to respond to or research lang questions)</th>
</tr>
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<td>A: Focuses on transcript of natural written language – transpose content for speaking – analyse &amp; account for key features of material &amp; evaluate how context has influenced use. Answer 1 out of 4 essay-style questions. Students will need to be able to discuss &amp; explore concepts &amp; issues they have undertaken in other units.</td>
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<td>B: Language topics – questions on knowledge about Lang &amp; issues in Lang debates. B: Language variation and change – choice of 2 questions (data stimulus or essay cue or a mixture)</td>
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<tr>
<th>WJEC (2007)</th>
<th>Demonstrating expertise in writing</th>
<th>B: Social contexts (Lang change, original &amp; independent lang re-searchers. Show ability to respond to or research lang questions)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Focuses on transcript of natural written language – transpose content for speaking – analyse &amp; account for key features of material &amp; evaluate how context has influenced use. Answer 1 out of 4 essay-style questions. Students will need to be able to discuss &amp; explore concepts &amp; issues they have undertaken in other units.</td>
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<td>B: Language topics – questions on knowledge about Lang &amp; issues in Lang debates. B: Language variation and change – choice of 2 questions (data stimulus or essay cue or a mixture)</td>
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12.4 Language and Literature – Outline of Modules

(Note: Cwk = coursework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 1 (AS)</th>
<th>Unit 2 (AS)</th>
<th>Unit 3 (AS)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Module:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Module:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Module:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language production</td>
<td>Language in literature</td>
<td>Analysis of lit &amp; non-lit texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Cwk or open book exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Cwk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Closed book exam 2 sections, Cwk or open book exam</td>
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<td>Closed book exam</td>
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**AQA spec A (from 2007) AQA spec B (from 2007) OCR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cwk</th>
<th>Closed book exam</th>
<th>Open book exam</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spoken word</td>
<td>A: Unprepared analysis – short 1 compulsory passage-based question on a set text, using linguistic concepts and approaches, considering both a literary standpoint, &amp; closely examining written language to produce a text using a non-lit, literary &amp; critical approach to own writing.</td>
<td>Exam or cwk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed book exam</td>
<td>B: Pre-1900 drama – 2 questions on 1 passage from a set text, using linguistic concepts and approaches, considering both a literary standpoint, &amp; closely examining written language to produce a text using a non-lit, literary &amp; critical approach to own writing.</td>
<td>Closed book exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closed book exam</td>
<td>C: WJEC anthology of pre-1900 poetry, for information, and as a source of evidence for decisions about language in texts.</td>
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**OCR**

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<td>B: Pre-1900 drama – 2 questions on 1 passage from a set text, using linguistic concepts and approaches, considering both a literary standpoint, &amp; closely examining written language to produce a text using a non-lit, literary &amp; critical approach to own writing.</td>
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**WJEC**

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<tr>
<td>Closed book exam</td>
<td>C: WJEC anthology of pre-1900 poetry, for information, and as a source of evidence for decisions about language in texts.</td>
<td>Closed book exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4 (A2)</td>
<td>Comparative Literary Studies</td>
<td>Text Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 1 (AS)</td>
<td>AQA spec A (from 2007)</td>
<td>AQA spec B (from 2007)</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Language production</td>
<td>Candidates tested on their ability to write for a specific audience and purpose, after reading a source which could act as the springboard for the production of a new piece of writing. Source could be literary or non-literary piece of spontaneous speech or a series of shorter related sources.</td>
<td>Introduction to Lang and Lit study Anthology ‘Town and Country’ – central text is a collection of prescribed poems</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 2 (AS)</th>
<th>Poetic Study</th>
<th>The Changing Language of Lit</th>
<th>Language in Literature: Poetry and Prose</th>
<th>Desk Study</th>
<th>Writing task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NB: One of the texts chosen for Module 2 or 3 must be pre 1900. Modern: Dylan Thomas – Selected Poems; The New Poetry (Selima Hill, Eavan Boland, Liz Lochhead, Geoff Hattersley); The Whitsun Weddings; Billy Clark – Taking off Emily Dickinson’s Clothes Pre 1900: The Pardoner’s Prologue and tale; Marvell – Selected Poems; Emily Dickinson – Selected Poems; Coleridge – Selected Poems</td>
<td>5 pairs of texts: The Hound of the Baskervilles + No 1 Ladies Detective Agency; Tom Brown’s Schooldays + Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone; Black Beauty + Watership Down; The Scarlet Letter + The Color Purple; Robinson Crusoe + The Coral Island</td>
<td>(one must be pre-1900): Question on passage from set text A: Poetry: Nun’s Priest’s Tale; Miller’s Tale; Frost – Selected poems; Cope – Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis B: Prose: Wuthering Heights; Frankenstein; Paddy Clarke; The Child in Time</td>
<td>Prereleased textual material for writing tasks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Desk Study</td>
<td>Writing task</td>
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<td>Writing task</td>
<td>Exam: Own writing drawing on what they have learned with evaluative and critical commentary for 1 piece Cwk: original writing and commentary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 3 (AS)</th>
<th>The Study of the Language of Prose and Speech</th>
<th>Production of Texts</th>
<th>Styles of Writing</th>
<th>Shorter Fiction Study</th>
<th>Analysis of lit and non-lit texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section A: Prose study</td>
<td>Writing for a range of purposes and audiences</td>
<td>Cwk: Folder (1500-2000 words, max 3000): 2 original pieces covering lit and non-lit writing and speech with a commentary.</td>
<td>Cwk: (1500 words + commentary as needed) or exam (open) Cwk: Free choice of text Exam: Till 2006: The Bloody Chamber; Somerset Maugham – Collected Short Stories; Dubliners; Alice Munro – Selected Stories; Diamond as Big as the Riz</td>
<td>Section A: Asked to comment on 3 texts inc at least one transcript of spontaneous spoken language Section B (closed): 19th/20th C prose literary text; Emma, Wuthering Heights, The Awakened and Other Selected Stories; Great Expectations; Enduring Love; The God of Small Things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB: One of the texts chosen for Module 2 or 3 must be pre 1900. Modern: Anita Shreve – Eden Close; An Evil Grading; Enduring Love; A Handful of Dust; Pre 1900: Wuthering Heights; Great Expectations; What Maisie Knew; Persuasion</td>
<td>Section B: Tested on their ability to identify, describe, explain and evaluate the distinctive features of spoken language in a variety of situations.</td>
<td>Cwk: Free choice of text</td>
<td>Exam: Till 2006: The Bloody Chamber; Somerset Maugham – Collected Short Stories; Dubliners; Alice Munro – Selected Stories; Diamond as Big as the Riz</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
12. Outline Specifications

12.5 Language and Literature – Outline of Texts (cont’d)
### 13. Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessed Objective (AO) (see 5.4, 6.3, 7.4)</th>
<th>The criteria by which student work is assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AEA Advanced Extension Award (see 9.0)</strong></td>
<td>Examination introduced as an additional award to test the most able A Level students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AS</strong> (see 3.1)</td>
<td>The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) is a stand-alone qualification and is valued as half a full A Level qualification. It has three units (assessed at the standard expected for a student half way through an A Level course) that contribute 50 per cent of the marks towards full A Level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2</strong> (see 3.1)</td>
<td>The A2 is the second half of a full A Level qualification. It has three units (assessed at the standard expected for a student at the end of a full A Level course) that are worth 50 percent of the full A Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awarding Bodies</strong> (see 4.1, 4.3)</td>
<td>A new name for the old ‘Exam Boards’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum 2000</strong> (see 3.0)</td>
<td>The new system of AS and A2 exams introduced in 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DARTs</strong> (see 5.8.4)</td>
<td>Directed Activities Related to Texts. Strategies grouped under the heading DARTs all involve the active interrogation of texts, for example: cloze procedure, fragments, sequencing exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DfES</strong></td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English and Media Centre</strong></td>
<td>A not-for-profit educational publishers and teachers’ centre supporting teachers and students in English and Media at secondary level (aged 11-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frameworks</strong> (see 6.2)</td>
<td>The terms used to describe the set of concepts that students need to apply to analysing texts in Language A Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GCE</strong></td>
<td>General Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal assessment</strong> (see 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5.3)</td>
<td>Coursework assignments marked by the school and moderated externally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linear</strong> (see 3.2)</td>
<td>Organisation of the course in which students are examined on all units at the end of the two year course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modular</strong> (see 3.2)</td>
<td>Organisation of the course in which students are examined on separate units at different stages over the two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATE</strong></td>
<td>National Association of Teachers of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-release material</strong></td>
<td>A pack of materials sent out in advance for students to read and work on independently before the exam, where unseen tasks are based on the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QCA</strong></td>
<td>Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specification</strong></td>
<td>The new name for the old ‘syllabus’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Criteria</strong> (see 4.3, 5.4, 6.1, 7.4, 10)</td>
<td>QCA’s set of compulsory guidelines for the construction of specifications in each subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synoptic unit</strong> (see 5.5)</td>
<td>Principle of requiring a certain amount of the assessment to be ‘holistic’, exploring connections between different elements of the course as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The three Englishes</strong> (see 4.1)</td>
<td>The way people sometimes refer to the suite of subjects available at A Level: English Literature, English Language and English Language and Literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Weblinks and other resources

Official bodies
DFES
www.dfes.gov.uk

QCA
www.qca.org.uk

QCA 14-19 Learning website
2) Case studies of good practice in schools and colleges: http://www.qca.org.uk/14-19/6th-form-schools/68_1272.htm

Bodies providing training
The English and Media Centre: www.englishandmedia.co.uk
National Association for Teaching English: www.nate.org.uk
London Association for Teaching English: www.late.org.uk

Awarding Bodies
AQA: www.aqa.org.uk

English Language specification A: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLaA.html

English Language specification A Examiners’ Reports: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLaA_exam.html

English Language and Literature specification A: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLLA.html

English Language and Literature specification A Examiners’ Reports: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLLA_exam.html

English Literature specification A: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLiA.html

English Literature specification A Examiners’ Reports: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLiA_exam.html

English Language specification B: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLaB.html

English Language specification B Examiners’ Reports: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLaB_exam.html

English Language and Literature specification B: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLLB.html

English Language and Literature specification B Examiners’ Reports: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLLB_exam.html
14. Weblinks and other resources

English Literature specification B: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLiB.html

English Literature specification B Examiners’ Reports: http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/engLiB_exam.html

Edexcel: http://www.edexcel.org.uk

English Language specification and Examiners’ Reports: http://www.edexcel.org.uk/quals/gce/english/adv/9178/

English Language and Literature specification and Examiners’ Reports: http://www.edexcel.org.uk/quals/gce/english/adv/9179/

English Language specification and Examiners’ Reports: http://www.edexcel.org.uk/quals/gce/english/adv/9180/

OCR: http://www.ocr.org.uk/

English Language Specification: http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/AS_ALevelGCEEnglishLanguage.html

English Language Examiners’ Reports
Unavailable online. Order from http://publications.ocr.org.uk

English Language and Literature specification: http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/AS_ALevelGCEEnglishLanguageandLiterature.html

English Language and Literature Examiners’ Reports
Unavailable online. Order from http://publications.ocr.org.uk

English Literature specification: http://www.ocr.org.uk/ORC/qualifications/AS_ALevelGCEEnglishLiterature.html

English Literature Examiners’ Reports
Unavailable online. Order from http://publications.ocr.org.uk

WJEC: www.wjec.co.uk

English Language specification and Examiners’ Reports: http://www.wjec.co.uk/elang.html

English Language and Literature specification and Examiners’ Reports: http://www.wjec.co.uk/elanglit.html

English Literature specification and Examiners’ Reports: http://www.wjec.co.uk/elit.html
Books and weblinks
The English Language List: http://markboardman.com/englang/englangfront.php

Universal Teacher: www.universalteacher.org.uk

emagazine: www.emagazine.org.uk

The English Review: www.philipallan.co.uk/

Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002
Carol Atherton
Palgrave Macmillan (2005)
ISBN 13 9781 4039 4679 9

Text: Message
The Future of A Level English
NATE Post-16 Committee (2004)
ISBN 1904709 15X
www.nate.org.uk

Four Perspectives on Transition: English Literature from Sixth Form to University
Andrew Green
ESC Report 10 (2005)
ISBN 0 902 19498 4
http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/publications/reports.php

Second Reading: a report debating the present state of English at AS and A level, and identifying priorities for revising the English subject criteria
Adrian Barlow
English Association Pamphlet (2005)
The English Subject Centre,
Royal Holloway, University of London,
Egham TW20 0EX
T• 01784 443221 esc@rhul.ac.uk
www.english.heacademy.ac.uk

The English Subject Centre supports all aspects of the teaching and learning of English in higher education in the United Kingdom. It is part of the Higher Education Academy www.heacademy.ac.uk

As one of its activities, the Subject Centre gathers and disseminates information to the subject community. This report series publishes the outcomes of substantial projects undertaken or commissioned by the Subject Centre.

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