



# GCE AS and A level subject content for English literature

## Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all AS and A level specifications in a English literature.

## Aims and objectives

2. AS and A level specifications in English literature must encourage students to develop their interest in and enjoyment of literature and literary studies as they:

- read widely and independently both set texts and others that they have selected for themselves
- engage critically and creatively with a substantial body of texts and ways of responding to them
- develop and effectively apply their knowledge of literary analysis and evaluation
- explore the contexts of the texts they are reading and others' interpretations of them

3. In addition, A level specifications must encourage students to develop their interest in and enjoyment of literature and literary studies as they undertake independent and sustained studies to deepen their appreciation and understanding of English literature, including its changing traditions.

## Subject content

4. AS and A level specifications in English literature must build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at GCSE, introducing students to the discipline of advanced literary studies, and must require reading of the major literary genres of poetry, prose and drama. A level specifications must extend these studies in breadth and depth, further developing students' ability to analyse, evaluate and make connections.

## Knowledge and understanding

5. AS and A level specifications must require students to use their detailed knowledge and understanding of individual works of literature to explore relationships between texts and to appreciate the significance of cultural and contextual influences on readers and writers.

6. AS and A level specifications must require students to show knowledge and understanding of a range of literary texts. Texts for study must be chosen so that they illuminate one another and enable connections.

7. A level specifications must include at least two examples of each of the genres of prose, poetry and drama across the course as a whole.
8. AS specifications must include at least one example of each of the genres of prose, poetry and drama across the course as a whole.
9. Specifications must contain clear principles for the review and updating of texts.
10. A level specifications must cover a minimum of eight texts. Students must experience a wide range of reading in poetry, prose and drama that must include all of the following:
  - at least 3 texts published before 1900, including at least one play by Shakespeare
  - at least one work first published or performed after 2000
11. AS specifications must cover a minimum of four texts that must include at least one text published before 1900.
12. A level specifications must also include a text which has not previously been named for study (an “unseen text”).
13. Students’ study may include texts in translation that have been influential and significant in the development of literature in English.
14. Specifications must ensure that students experience a wide range of literature of sufficient substance and quality to merit serious attention.
15. AS and A level specifications must require students to show knowledge and understanding of:
  - ways in which writers shape meanings in texts
  - ways in which individual texts are interpreted by different readers
  - ways in which texts relate to one another and to the contexts in which they are written and read
16. A level specifications must also require students to show knowledge and understanding of:
  - ways in which texts are interpreted by different readers, including over time
  - ways in which texts relate to one another and to literary traditions, movements and genres
  - the significance of cultural and contextual influences on readers and writers

## Skills

17. AS and A level specifications must require students to:
  - read texts in a variety of ways and respond critically and creatively
  - vary strategies for reading, including for detail, overview and gist depending on the texts being studied and purposes for reading them

- explore connections across texts
- identify and consider how attitudes and values are expressed in texts
- draw on their understanding of different interpretations in responding to and evaluating texts
- communicate fluently, accurately and effectively their knowledge, understanding and judgement of texts
- use literary critical concepts and terminology with understanding and discrimination
- make appropriate use of the conventions of writing in literary studies, including accurate referencing and use of quotations

18. A level specifications must require students to develop judgement and independence as they synthesise and reflect upon their knowledge and understanding of a range of literary texts and ways of reading them.