



Curriculum Overview

Year 9 – English 2021-2022

Rationale for Year 9 English

Year 9 is a pivotal point for every student on their educational journey. In English, we use this year as an opportunity to integrate texts and topics to broaden the curriculum whilst introducing and building on skills they will need at GCSE. The curriculum is planned carefully to include a balance of demanding and engaging topics that are both fun and challenging. We aim to continue a love of reading to provide the best life opportunities for our children. They will study topics that allow them to reflect on the past and engage with world around them. Reading and writing topics are taught in unison to ensure a deeper understanding of concepts and use quality texts to inspire writing skills. Throughout every topic, a conscious focus on improving active engagement and oracy is at the forefront for every teacher.

What will students learn and why?

Students begin the year by recapping the key skills in English. By doing so, it gives all students an even opportunity to begin the year successfully as key concepts and skills are revisited and explained. As in previous years, units of study are interleaved, allowing for a broader application of both reading and writing skills and knowledge. Initially, students study John Steinbeck's novel 'Of Mice and Men' alongside transactional writing, using context as a stimuli to explore a range of non-fiction forms. These topics broaden students' understanding of a celebrated American writer; contextual understanding of 'The Great Depression'; racial segregation through the Jim Crow Laws' and the concept of 'the American Dream'. Opportunities are provided for students to write for a range for non-fiction forms: addressing their year group in a motivational speech, publishing an article in a newsletter and creating a whole-class magazine, including current topical issues and debates.

Additionally, students study a range of poems through an anthology titled: 'Identity and Discrimination.' They explore the intentions and purpose of poetry through the study of celebrated contemporary writers such as Benjamin Zephaniah, John Agard, Simon Armitage and Grace Nicols. This is an important topic of study as it draws on the multicultural context and identity of St. Joseph's. Students are also encouraged to write their own collection of poems whilst studying key writers and demonstrating their understanding of poetic forms and techniques.

Students are also introduced to writers of the 19th Century whilst crafting their own narratives through the study of imaginative writing. The selection of 19th Century extracts include: engaging contextual concepts from childhood, the Industrial Revolution and the workhouse, to exploration, crime and piracy. Using 19th Century extracts as a stimulus, students develop their creative thinking and technical accuracy of their own imaginative writing. They will explore a range of writing styles and genres, such as mystery, Gothic and the bildungsroman.

Finally, students explore the genre of Tragedy through Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In this unit, they will discover the conventions of Tragedy according to Greek philosopher Aristotle, exploring concepts such as 'the Tragic Hero' and their fatal flaw. They are expected to engage with the text through drama and close textual analysis. The central focus of this unit is to prepare students to write a coherent and academic essay in relation to a key theme, preparing them for their studies of *Macbeth* at GCSE.

How will students learn?

Students develop a deeper understanding of topics by interleaving skills and providing additional time to explore and digest the content of each unit. Students are exposed to high standards of literature to model and inspire their own writing. Throughout the academic year, students have the opportunity to read and write poetry, plays and prose. A key part of every student's learning journey in English is through the use of knowledge organisers. Knowledge organisers are provided for every assessed topic as a revision resource of the minimum-required knowledge, and students are tested on this in class. Teaching techniques such as: retrieval, modelling and elaboration are used to improve understanding and encoding of information into the long-term memory. Low stakes testing in the form of vocabulary tests are used every term to expand students' vocabulary and to improve their confidence in both written analysis and comprehension.

How will students be assessed?

Assessment has been mapped out to ensure students are assessed on a broad range of content and skills with appropriate differentiation and challenge as they progress throughout KS3. Students are tested four times in the year: three comprehensive reading and writing papers, which test the relevant key skills taught across the year and a speaking and listening assessment task to ensure the development of oracy. Students will experience assessment in literary and non-fiction reading as well as non-fiction and imaginative writing. After the initial baseline task, the first assessment will combine an exploration of Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men' and transactional writing with the expectation that students draft an extended a short story narrative. Later in the year, students will undertake an exam in 19th Century unseen extracts and transactional writing. The reading section will include a combination of questions styles, encouraging students to identify, explain, analyse and evaluate. The writing section will require students to craft a short story narrative. Finally, students will end the year with a poetry exam from an anthology of comprised of writer from a range of backgrounds and cultures.

What is the aim for learners by the end of the year in comparison to the previous year?

Students are challenged with texts written from writers with a wide range of cultural backgrounds, building on their previous literary studies in Year 8. The selection of poems and prose fosters a love of reading but also demands a greater sense of maturity and understanding. The themes of study such as: identity, inequality, discrimination, class division and gender are pitched to encourage students to think thoughtfully about the past. Through discussion and debate, students are taught to empathise with minority and marginalised members of societies past and present, and be encouraged to celebrate diversity in our own local community. By interleaving topics, students learn non-fiction forms through challenging contextual links to 1920's and 1930's America. As the GCSE curriculum includes 19th Century writers in both Language and Literature, we feel it is important to introduce students to key texts from that period.

Students have already developed a good grounding of literature from this period through their studies in Years 7 and 8. By exploring a topic centred on context, this gives students a strong foundation of background knowledge equipping them to decode, analyse and evaluate texts at GCSE. Grammar and writing skills are taught explicitly to improve standards and have been given increased curriculum time to allow students space to complete extended pieces of writing and experience the drafting, editing and redrafting process. Students will build on their knowledge of Shakespearean Tragedy from Year 8 and will consolidate their understanding of key features of the genre. Students will be expected to engage in a class performance of the play and this will assess their ability to create convincing characterisation which will, in turn, influence their own imaginative writing skills.