

Curriculum Overview

Year 7 – English 2020-2021



Rationale for Year 7 English

In Year 7, the English Department provide a gateway into Secondary English by bridging the gap between students' prior learning and their current school experience, helping students to appreciate that their learning is a continuation of their established skill set. Thematic topics have been chosen alongside clear objectives to allow for mastery of specific skills and knowledge in this all-important first year, simultaneously encouraging a real engagement in the subject. Literature from high-value writers has been carefully selected: literary texts underpin all units, as students are taught to read analytically, responding personally to themes, ideas and constructs through exploring authorial craft. In addition, the Yr7 curriculum has been designed to help students develop their own individual writing styles, with opportunities to use their imagination when writing for a range of contexts. Oracy and factual writing also remain embedded in the curriculum, to help prepare students for life after school.

What will students learn and why?

Year 7 start their St Joseph's career by continuing the 'Spy Fiction' topic they started at the end of primary school. Students begin by analysing the writing of the author Anthony Horowitz, whilst reading his novel, 'Stormbreaker' in addition to applying features of the genre to their own writing. This transition project allows students to build on existing skills, whilst introducing them to the expectations of Key Stage 3, and is followed by a series of 'skills lessons' where students practise a range of key abilities necessary to access the subject at a higher level.

Secondly, students study the works of both literary heritage and modern writers, including a writer-study of the 19th Century writer, Charles Dickens. These lessons are linked to non-fiction writing to allow for interleaving of both reading and writing. Students will examine 'A Christmas Carol', 'Oliver Twist' and 'Great Expectations', reading a number of key extracts and analysing Dickens' prominent writing style, focusing on the writer's use of language and structure. The social and historical context of the Victorian period is also examined through both Dickens' fiction and non-fiction texts from the time, allowing students to engage with the concept of authorial intention.

Additionally, students read modern literature, and engage with the theme of 'adventure and survival' by studying 'Hatchet' by Gary Paulsen, a contemporary bildungsroman narrative. Students focus on developing their reading strategies, literary comprehension and fact-finding, in addition to developing their ability to identify features of and analyse language and structure in narrative. Through interleaving, this unit is taught alongside a short body of lessons focused on 'Adventure Writing', focusing on non-fiction reading and writing. This unit focuses on examples of non-fiction writing, such as Bear Grylls' autobiography, 'Mud, Sweat and Tears.' Students are guided through how to form and structure their own adventure writing, through real-life examples and teacher modelling, before drafting and writing their own examples.

Moreover, students will thematically study 'Gothic Literature' through Pullman's dramatic adaptation of 'Frankenstein' alongside a 'Gothic Writing' unit. Students develop their contextual understanding of the early Victorian period, scientific advancements of the time and the authorial context of Mary Shelley. Additionally, they engage with the original source material in addition to Pullman's interpretation, but this form of recreation allows for opportunities for drama and Spoken Language activities, furthering engagement. Within the unit, students develop their understanding of linguistic and structural features in drama, in addition to exploring key literary devices such as characterisation and plot. Students will begin to engage with the text critically, making reflective interpretations of the Monster as a sympathetic character, and Frankenstein's motives behind his actions. Alongside this, students will study writing from the Gothic genre, primarily from the 19th Century, and they are provided with opportunities to plan, draft and create their own Gothic writing.

In addition, students will study 'poetry in different contexts.' The unit begins with classic poems, such as 'The Jabberwocky' and moves onto more implicit, metaphorical monsters, slowly increasing students' ability to decipher implicit messages through the poetry. Students are taught to consider symbolic messages, allowing access to the complex forms of poetry. The unit provides opportunities for identification and analysis of linguistic and structural devices within different poems. Students are provided with imaginative writing prompts interleaved throughout their study of the poetic form, and opportunities for the design and creation of their own poetry anthology.

Finally, students will also study a multi-faceted unit covering War Literature which aims to cover a significant breadth of literary texts, whilst retaining a core focus on poetry. The unit covers seminal literature from The Great War, WWI and modern warfare and is comprised of a range of forms, purposes and styles, including: poetry, prose, non-fiction and media. This challenging unit covers the contexts of different time periods and conflicts and provides opportunities for reading comprehension, poetic analysis and comparison, exploration of non-fiction texts, imaginative and transactional writing.

How will students learn?

Students will develop a deeper understanding of topics by interleaving skills and units, providing time to master the set objectives. Students are exposed to high standards of literature from a range of sources from which to model and inspire their own writing. Throughout the academic year, students will have the opportunity to read and write poetry and prose. 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 crafted into every unit, in addition to knowledge organiser tests.

How will students be assessed?

Students are tested three times in the year: a baseline assessment upon entry and two comprehensive reading and writing papers, which test the relevant key skills taught across the year. Following the baseline assessment, students sit a reading paper which involves a 'Dickensian' extract, and analysis of language. Though modelled from the Language Paper 1 structure, the assessment is appropriately differentiated for age. The writing section is based on students' study of 'Spy Fiction' and involves students crafting an engaging opening to a narrative. Later in the year, students sit a reading and writing paper which involves an extract from the novel 'Hatchet' and a writing paper which requires students to create a non-fiction text based on their study of 'Adventure Writing' in term 3. In terms 5 and 6, the War Literature unit opens up opportunities for various formative assessments, including Spoken Language.

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

By the end of Year 7, students will have learned how to closely analyse the writing of an author, and be able to express the explicit and implicit messages found within it, both verbally and in the written form. Students are introduced to the PEAWI writing structure and develop their ability to write analytically about nuance at word and sentence level. They will begin exploring writers' craft, including identifying and commenting on structural features, and both identifying and *analysing* language devices. Some students will begin to form critical opinions about the texts they study.

Students study a range of literary forms and genres in Year 7: poetry, prose, drama, media, literary non-fiction and a range of traditional non-fiction forms. Whilst many of these forms have been studied at primary level, variation comes in the texts themselves, approach to comprehension and analysis, developing literary opinions and understanding, and, in writing, considering structure across whole-texts (of varying lengths), within paragraphs and developing an imaginative viewpoint. The most significant difference for Year 7 students is moving past merely spotting devices at linguistic and structural level, and exploring meanings and effects on the reader whilst using quotations to consider authorial craft and intention.

The authors studied across Year 7 cross a range of eras, from 19th Century Dickens to 21st Century Horowitz, so students can begin learning how to decode texts from different time periods and genres. They will also be introduced to a range of literary and historical contexts which aid them in better understanding authorial intention and reader response. This will help to build their knowledge of the literary timeline, encouraging critical responses as they move through the key stage. By exposing students to valuable literature from both fiction and non-fiction forms, students will adapt and use similar techniques in their own writing. Writing forms, structures and content are taught in conjunction with literature, rather than in isolation, so that students continue to see the links between structural and linguistic choices in canonised writers', and their own writing efforts.