



OXFORD
HIGH SCHOOL

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

A-Level English Literature



Why English?

Students choose English Literature A-level for all kinds of reasons. Combining an English course with Maths and Science options enables you to develop the skills of highly effective communication you will use in your future careers. If you choose to specialise in Arts, Humanities or Languages, the shaping of arguments, facility with ideas and precision of response fostered in A-level English Literature complements the skills and interests you are pursuing elsewhere. If English is your first love, then you don't need us to tell you of the thrill of getting caught up in a great story, being moved by a poem, or laughing (or crying) as a play unfolds on stage. You are studying English Literature because it matters to you – a lot. As a subject, we have a very high retention rate between Years 12 and 13, and many students have gone on to study English at university, including Cambridge and Oxford. Our results are consistently outstanding, and we pride ourselves on the success of all of our students.

English Literature

English Literature in the Sixth Form at OHS is intellectually demanding, dynamic and distinctive – a course that will challenge you to think and learn above and beyond the confines of an exam syllabus, while equipping you to achieve at the highest levels.

English lessons combine energising discussions with detailed, scholarly textual exploration - and a sense of fun! You will engage with literary texts, ideas and opinions in an open way, developing your own responses increasingly independently, while broadening and refining your personal expression.

You will find that conversations in class become more democratic exchanges of ideas than you are likely to have experienced before; equally you'll find yourself using a variety of approaches, including art, drama and re-creative writing, as ways into the texts you study.

We follow the OCR English Literature A-level (H472), which gives you the opportunity to engage with some of the greatest texts ever written, from the Middle Ages to exciting texts from the present day, while giving you plenty of flexibility to pursue your own particular enthusiasms through wide reading and practical criticism. Text choices vary from year to year; the list below is the core texts studied for examination and coursework by the current Year 13.

Jeffrey Eugenides – *The Virgin Suicides*

Geoffrey Chaucer - *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*

Edward Albee – *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

William Shakespeare – *Twelfth Night*

Jane Austen – *Sense and Sensibility*

Virginia Woolf – *Mrs Dalloway*

The poetry of Rupi Paur

Beyond the classroom

You can expect a wide range of opportunities to enrich your study of English Literature beyond the classroom. We organise lunchtime sessions with visiting speakers from the University, plus film evenings, theatre trips and outings to galleries and gardens. At the beginning of Year 13, we have a 3-day residential visit focusing on our coursework topic area, literary influences and practical criticism. This is a wonderful opportunity to visit the places where authors wrote their finest works, to immerse yourself in literature in stunning locales, and even don some 18th century garb and learn some steps from Regency dance in an English country house!

There is a wide range of co-curricular clubs run by members of the department and by Sixth Formers, including creative writing, poetry and book groups, and opportunities to work with the younger years in the Year 7 English club, or by putting on plays. We regularly work with students to help them direct their own work or adaptations and stage their plays for an outside audience.

Looking ahead

English Literature A-level is on the list of ‘facilitating subjects’ identified by the Russell Group of universities as keeping open the widest range of degree courses and career options. Every year, we run extra sessions tailored to students who would like to study English at university, including practice work with the ELAT for those who wish to apply to Oxbridge. We will also arrange for practice interviews.



Year 13 residential visit to London – a candlelit performance of a scene from *The Duchess of Malfi* near the site of the very first performance at Blackfriars Hall, 1613.

'Studying English will give you *such* a wide view of literature, and of the world, which means that it will complement all of your other subject choices. I'm studying it at university – it's the best!'

Pupil Year 13

"I now realise how much my OHS English lessons have seeped into the way I work and what I'm interested in. From talking to others about what they'd done at school, I realised that I truly had been given a huge advantage when it comes to aspects such as critical discussion. Other students here just hadn't been encouraged to follow their own line of interest in the same way that we were encouraged to."

Pupil writing in her first year of studying English at university

'The kind of feedback I got on my essays when I was at OHS was better than anything I ever got from my tutors at Oxford. The English department helped me to develop my ideas so that I learnt to write clearly and argue convincingly. This focused teaching helped me be a better writer and academic in my career at Oxford, France, London and Cambridge, and most recently at my new post as researcher, writer and tutor at the Open University.'

Pupil reflecting on her English A-Level post-university