



A-LEVEL

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Why study English Literature at A-Level?

Do you want to:

- Delve into a selection of canonical and contemporary texts that explore both the flaws and beauties of humanity?
- Study a play that dramatises the breakdown of the human mind, set against the fallen grandeur of the Old South in America and which draws on genres including Plastic Theatre and Expressionism?
- Analyse the hugely influential 'Frankenstein', a novel written at the height of medical science's exploration into the principle of life and death?
- Explore why *The Handmaid's Tale*, written during the rise of the Christian Right in the USA during the 1980s, was adopted by protesters as recently as 2022 in response to the overturning of *Roe vs Wade* (which allowed women access to abortions)?
- Develop invaluable study skills, including the ability to debate, present, and write extended essays, to prepare you for university-level study or your future career?
- Discuss and interrogate different interpretations of texts (including those of your peers, teachers and literary critics) in a supportive group environment, evaluating complex readings and ideas about texts to come to your own independent conclusions about the writer's intentions and validity of an interpretation?
- With the support of an assigned mentor, independently research and compare two texts for coursework, following your own line of critical inquiry, to pursue further study in an area of literature that is particularly appealing to you?
- Study a facilitating subject?

A-Level English Literature develops your understanding of the construction of meaning in literary texts. Much of the course is focused on your independent engagement with and analysis of texts from a wide range of time periods and genres, orientating your interpretations in relation to other readings of the text. Discussion and debate are at the heart of English Literature, as is a genuine interest in probing literary texts to tease out their many layers of meaning.

How is A-level English Literature different to GCSE study?

A-Level English Literature is similar to GCSE in that you will study and analyse literary texts, including plays, novels and poetry. At A-Level you will go into much more depth in your study and exploration of the texts and there is greater focus on evaluating different interpretations, considering how different critical lenses influence meaning.

Not only that, at BRGS we study a diverse range of literature that showcases the best of English Literature, and in our opinion represents a challenging and engaging next step from GCSE study. From a classic Shakespearean tragedy featuring themes of race and jealousy, an example of a novel from the early 19th Century which blends traditions of the Gothic alongside early science fiction, to a collection of varied poetry all written post-2000 about themes including gender, conflict, and identity, the English Literature A-Level course is an engaging blend of high-quality plays, poems and prose that will develop your analytical skills and challenge the way you see the world.

Plus, did we mention that at A-Level the exams are open book? Unlike at GCSE, at A-Level you get a blank copy of the text with you in the exams; this allows you to precisely reference from a whole text in your exam response.



Entry Requirements

To study A-Level English Literature at BRGS, you will need a **minimum** of grade 6 in English Literature.

Overview of the course

| | Component 1: Drama | Component 2: Prose | Component 3: Poetry | Component 4: NEA |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Content | <i>Othello</i> – William Shakespeare <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> – Tennessee Williams | <i>Frankenstein</i> – Mary Shelley <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> – Margaret Atwood | <i>Poems of the Decade</i> anthology and unseen poetry <i>Metaphysical Poetry</i> | <i>The Bloody Chamber</i> – Angela Carter Your choice of text from a selection |
| Structure | Section A – <i>Othello</i> : an essay question from a choice of two. Wider critical reading included in your response. Section B – <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> : an essay question from a choice of two. | A comparative essay from a choice of two questions exploring both texts above. The novels are grouped into the ‘Science and Society’ category. | Section A – <i>Poems of the Decade</i> & Unseen: a comparative essay from a choice of two in response to an unseen poem. Section B – <i>Metaphysical Poetry</i> : an essay from a choice of two questions analysing the named poem and another from the anthology | An extended essay completed independently throughout Year 12 and Year 13. You will be assigned a coursework mentor (a teacher) to guide you through the research and provide feedback along the way. |
| Weighting | 30% | 20% | 30% | 20% |

Where to next?

| Degree Courses | Careers |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Marketing / Business Law History Modern Foreign Languages <p><i>Note: Several university courses list A Level English as an essential entry requirement. Please note that English Literature (unlike English Language) is recognised as a <u>Facilitating Subject</u> for applications to Oxbridge and Russell Group Universities.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing Education Law Politics Content Manager Editor Journalist / Writer Civil Service |

What can you expect from A-Level English Literature results at BRGS?

53% of students gained an A or A* in 2022 & 2023

79% of students gained a B or above in 2022 & 2023

100% of students gained A*-D in 2022 & 2023

What do our A-Level English Literature students say about the course?

“Literature is enjoyable to study as you’re finally able to read all the books you’ve often wanted to, but maybe felt too intimidated by in the past - with all the support and guidance to help you form a unique interpretation.” **Cara**

“English Literature is an incredibly rewarding subject and, for me, I love the freedom that it provides compared to many other subjects... it develops a versatility of the mind, a trait vital to working and university life.” **Louis**

“I enjoy analysing and exploring the deeper meaning behind various parts of texts, and looking at the whole play/novel as a whole.” **Sophie**