

Year 8

Common approach at Key Stage 3

Our aim is to read a range of challenging and inspiring texts with students, and to instill in them a genuine and lasting love of the written word. Our curriculum provides an increasing range of depth and challenge for students, where we revisit Shakespeare, the Nineteenth Century Novel and poetry in each year, so students are well equipped to explore these genres at Key Stage 4. We increase the level of challenge over Key Stage 3 introducing more challenging texts later, or introducing challenging texts earlier using extracts. By the end of Year 8, all students have had the opportunity to express themselves creatively, inspired by their own lives and various literary texts. With all schemes of work students study tier 2 and 3 vocabulary in context. We integrate 'Hot Tasks' into each half term so students have the opportunity to regularly respond to teacher feedback.

We start Year 8 with a pair of short stories: *The Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle and *Lamb to the Slaughter* by Roald Dahl. The unit looks to explore the notion of villains and victims, whilst also examining the conventions of the murder mystery genre and representation of women. This unit develops and strengthens the students' skills of comparison, and extends their expertise and experience of nineteenth century prose, which looks forward to their GCSE text; *A Christmas Carol*. With all schemes of work we instruct students on the use of tier 2 and 3 vocabulary.

Nineteenth Century prose is also a major focus in the next half term, where texts such as *Frankenstein* are used as inspiration in the Gothic Writing Unit. Students identify and examine techniques such as pathetic fallacy, setting the scene and developing detailed descriptions using the five senses, then emulate these techniques in their own writing. The Gothic Unit is completed with a short study of the ballad, a form often used to convey ideas of the supernatural and other worldliness.

We next move on to a quick read of *Now Is The Time For Running*, a refugee story about two brothers, set in a turbulent Zimbabwe and South Africa. This book gives students the opportunity to enjoy a compelling story which explores themes around friendship, family, mental health, the refugee experience and prejudice. Students' understanding of these 'big ideas' and the novel itself are enriched by studying non-fiction texts alongside the book. We then study a modern Drama text: *Noughts and Crosses*, by Malorie Blackman. In terms of genre we explore the techniques of modern drama such as the use of stage directions and the writing of dialogue, which points forward to the study of the modern play *An Inspector Calls*, studied for GCSE, as well as the language used for a variety of effects. We widen the student's experience of genre with this dystopian vision of the near future, and explore themes of love and prejudice.

After this novel, we enjoy another book about brothers and war: *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo. This novel explores ideas about family, cowardice, power, justice, mental health and disability: students are able to draw powerful links between *Private Peaceful* and *Now Is The Time For Running*. We also spend time investigating Morpurgo's language in detail and study some poetry from World War One in conjunction with this. This novel expands students' knowledge of an important area of cultural knowledge and links with the 1912 setting of *An Inspector Calls*. Student's close reading skills are developed and the effects of a first person narrator who changes across the course of a novel is examined.

Students then have the opportunity to express themselves further in both prose and poetry, in this interleaved Character Voice Scheme, which revisits and strengthens skills taught in the Gothic Unit. . They develop character voices by studying a range of rich extracts (from *The Hunger Games*, *The Road* and other contemporary texts) and using these as a source of inspiration for some re-creative writing. The emphasis here is on building a rich and ambitious vocabulary to employ in their own creative writing, inspired by their reading. Students also have the chance to write their own poetry, in different forms, such as blackout poetry, sonnets and odes, about their own life experiences. We are keen for young people to have the chance to express themselves freely and creatively: finding a voice is a key life skill.

Year 8 ends with *Julius Caesar*. Students explore and learn about important abstract concepts such as democracy, treachery, politics and power. They also learn about the world of Ancient Rome and draw parallels with our modern world: how do politicians address a crowd? How do they convey messages and persuade us to believe in them? What

happens when power changes hands? We look in particular at key speeches and students finish by writing in the voice of one of the play's characters, voicing their unspoken thoughts. This deepens students' understanding of character and introduces the theme of patriarchy in Shakespeare for study in later years

Year 8 builds on the work of Year 7, while looking ahead to the older years and the demands of the GCSE course. Students do a lot of reading this year and have the chance to immerse themselves in two differently stimulating novels. This 'quick read' approach has been proven to increase students' reading enjoyment and attainment. We aim to hone students' analytical writing, focusing more on the 'how' part of their what-why-how approach to literary analysis. Students consider the contexts in which texts are produced and how this might affect meaning. The students are also encouraged to develop their opinions about the 'big ideas' in a text: what concepts is the writer exploring across their work? How do they convey these thoughts to the reader? Year 8 also provides students with the opportunity to write in a range of formats and voices, so that they can develop their own writing style and express who they are and what they believe, with conviction and fluency.