

A Level English Language and Literature Bridging Booklet

Introduction

Welcome to A Level English Language and Literature!

This is a diverse A Level – we cover lots of different topics ranging from the study of spoken language to American drama – but the most important skill that we teach you is the ability to think critically about what you’re reading and about the world around you. You also get to do a lot of creative writing!

Entry Criteria

Grade 6 in GCSE English Language

Grade 5 in GCSE English Literature

Specification

This is a breakdown of the content that we cover across the two years of the course:

Unit 1 Voices in Speech and Drama (Taught in Year 12)	Unit 2 Varieties in Language and Literature (Taught in Year 13)	Unit 3 Investigating and Creating Texts (Texts taught in Year 12 and coursework completed in Year 13)
40% of A Level Examined at end of course Exam is 2 hours 30 minutes Section A: <i>Voices in 20th and 21st Century texts</i>. We study an anthology of extracts and text types drawn from fiction and non-fiction (screenplays, articles, biography, speeches...). In the exam you answer a comparative essay question on one unseen extract and one text from the anthology. (25 marks) Section B: <i>Drama Texts</i>. We study a drama text from a prescribed list (in Sept 2025 this will either be <i>A Streetcar Named</i>	40% of A Level Examined at end of course Exam is 2 hours and 30 minutes Section A: <i>Unseen Prose Non-Fiction Texts</i>. We study a wide range of non-fiction types – building on those introduced in year 12 – in relation to the theme of <i>Crossing Boundaries</i> . In the exam you will answer one essay question on an unseen extract. (20 marks) Section B: <i>Prose Fiction and Other Genres</i>. You will study two texts taken from the ‘Crossing Boundaries’ theme. In	20% of A Level Not examined We study two texts: 1) Fiction: a collection of short stories called <i>The Bloody Chamber</i> by Angela Carter 2) Non-fiction: <i>a text of your choice</i> linked to a topic raised in our fiction text. You write 3 pieces of original writing: 1) A piece of creative fiction (short story, speech, diary extract etc.)

<p><i>Desire</i> by Tennessee Williams OR <i>Equus</i> by Peter Shaffer). In the exam you answer one extract-based essay questions. You will have a copy of the play in the exam. (25 marks)</p>	<p>the exam you will answer one comparative essay question on your chosen texts. (30 marks)</p>	<p>2) A piece of creative non-fiction (opinion piece, script for TV documentary etc.)</p> <p>3) A critical commentary comparing your creative pieces.</p> <p>(Total marks: 60 marks – 36 marks for creative pieces and 24 for commentary)</p>
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There are lots of different careers that Language and Literature can take you to and lots of different subjects at A Level that would complement it. These might include:

Careers

- Social media
- Journalism
- PR and marketing
- Communications
- Advertising
- Speech and language therapy
- Social work
- Politics

Complementary A Level subjects

- History
- Politics
- Drama
- Maths
- Biology
- Psychology
- Economics

Suggested Study

All of the following should be available to download from Amazon onto an e-reader or Kindle. You do not need to read all of them – pick the ones you like the look of the most.

Read

- The novel ***We Have Always Lived in the Castle*** by Shirley Jackson
- The novel ***The Secret History*** by Donna Tartt
- The novel ***The Lonely Londoners*** by Sam Selvon
- The poem ***'The Second Coming'*** by W.B. Yeats
- The play ***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*** by Tennessee Williams

Watch

- Pan's Labyrinth (film by Guillermo Del Toro)
- Jane Eyre (2011 adaptation)
- Derry Girls

Websites

- The British Library has some brilliant and short articles on areas of Literature. The articles on Victorian literature and the Gothic are particularly good. The link is <https://www.bl.uk/learning/online-resources>

Research Activities and Tasks

1. Read through sheet 1 (at the back of this document) on the basics of spoken language. Record a 30 second conversation on your phone with someone else in your house (try to stick to 2 people only – including yourself). The topic can be anything that you like. Using the model in example 1 (between the student and teacher) as a guide try to transcribe (to write down as it was spoken – no need for punctuation or capital letters or paragraphs) the conversation. Then answer the following questions:
 - a) What was the topic of your conversation?
 - b) Who was the agenda setter – i.e. the person who talks the most?
 - c) Did you stick to the same topic all the way through? If not, can you identify where the topic changed?
 - d) Can you pick out any of the non-fluency features that you've looked at?
 - e) Pick one example (or more). What do they tell us about what each speaker feels or wants to get out of the conversation?
2. Using the British Library website and other internet sources (the link is above in the suggested reading section). Research some of the features of the Gothic genre. You should produce a one page word document outlining some of its key features and key texts. Ideas might include:
 - a) Where was the first Gothic writing published?
 - b) When did the Gothic genre begin? When did it end?
 - c) What kinds of topics and characters did the first Gothic writers write about? Did this change?
 - d) List some key Gothic novels.
 - e) What does the concept of 'liminality' mean?
3. Read the extract from Salem's Lot (on sheet 2). Write a piece of creative writing (could be any form that you want – a short story, diary extracts etc.) exploring what you think happened in the town. You can use any narrative perspective that you want. Try to focus on building atmosphere and use of imagery.
4. Find 5 articles published in various publications/websites, with varying purposes and target audiences. Identify Form, Audience, Purpose for each one. Annotate the titles and opening 2 paragraphs for how they seek to engage their target readers.

Sheet 1

Key

(.) Micropause

(1)Timed pause (the number indicates the number of seconds)

// Overlapping (speakers talking over each other)

Example 1 (T = teacher and S = student)

T: right (.) sit down (.) sit down (.) Matt//

S: //okay

T: [*types on computer*] (.) so you sent it when

S: erm last night (.) last night about erm half
ten

T: no (.) [*reads from screen*] no (.) nothing

S: maybe later (.) try later

Example 2

FAGIN

And did Mr Jacob Marley pay you for
your trouble?

BOY

A farthing, sir.

FAGIN

A farthing! For the best part of a
mile. And I bet you ran all the
way, my dear, did you not?

BOY

Mostly.

Which example do you think is spontaneous? Which is planned?

Key Question

What is the difference between speech and writing?

The first extract is an example of spontaneous spoken conversation – it's not structured into sentences, the speakers repeat themselves and is unplanned. The second is scripted – although it's supposed to look like it is spontaneous (it's taken from a drama TV script) it flows and is easier to understand.

One of the most important things when looking at spoken language is trying to work out what the context is. This refers to the different aspects of situation in which speech might occur. It is important as it influences the choices being made. Audience, purpose and context are the most important factors in determining how language is used. Factors include:

- **Speaker identity (who's speaking)**
- **Audience (who the speaker's talking to)**
- **Setting (where the conversation is taking place)**
- **Topic**
- **Purpose**

Structure of spoken language

Most of the grammar in spontaneous speech is likely to be **non-standard** – i.e. not following the conventions of written English. For example most speech cannot be divided up into sentences and punctuated with full stops.

Tip: Try to avoid referring to 'sentences' when discussing unscripted spontaneous speech – use the terms utterances or constructions.

Some grammatical features common in spontaneous speech include:

- **Non-standard forms** – such as *We was late* or *I don't know nothing*. If these occur, think about how it is non-standard and perhaps why. In the first example a plural (*We*) is followed by a singular verb (*was*) instead of the plural verb *were*.
- **Ellipsis** – occurs when grammatical elements are missing from a construction. For example:

Spontaneous/Non-standard	Written/Standard
X: seen Mark lately Y: saw him yesterday	X: Have you seen Mark lately? Y: I saw him yesterday.

- **False starts** – changes from one grammatical construction to another (before the initial utterance has been completed when a speaker changes their mind about what they want to say: *I want to will you marry me*.

Non-fluency features

This term refers to the range of language features that might interrupt the flow of someone's speech

- **Fillers** – words and expressions that have little meaning but are often inserted into everyday speech. Examples could include *you know*, *ok*, *alright*, *sort of* etc. Speakers may use them out of habit and also give them more time to think. A **hedge** is a type of filler that softens the force with which something is said. This is usually because the speaker is embarrassed or reluctant to say it.
- **Filled pause** – voiced hesitations such as *um* or *er*.
- **Unvoiced pauses** – silent pauses that are signaled by the symbol (.). Sometimes they are called **micropauses**. If a pause is longer than a micropause the number of seconds is indicated in brackets, e.g. **(2)**. They could be used to take a breath or they could indicate hesitation.
- **Unintentional repetition** – either of a single word or several words at a time, e.g. where where was it. If the repetition appears to be deliberate it is not a non-fluency feature.

Sheet 2

The extract below is taken from the novel Salem's Lot by Stephen King. It's an extract from a newspaper investigating why all of the inhabitants within the town appear to have disappeared.

GHOST TOWN IN MAINE?

By John Lewis

Press-Herald Features Editor

JERUSALEM'S LOT

Jerusalem's Lot is a small town east of Cumberland and twenty miles north of Portland. It is not the first town in American history to just dry up and blow away, and will probably not be the last, but it is one of the strangest. Ghost towns are common in the American Southwest, where communities grew up almost overnight around rich gold and silver lodes and then disappeared almost as rapidly when the veins of ore played out, leaving empty stores and hotels and saloons to rot emptily in desert silence.

In New England the only counterpart to the mysterious emptying of Jerusalem's Lot, or 'salem's Lot as the natives often refer to it, seems to be a small town in Vermont called Momson. During the summer of 1923, Momson apparently just dried up and blew away, and all 312 residents

went with it. The houses and few small business buildings in the town's center still stand, but since that summer fifty-two years ago, they have been uninhabited. In some cases the furnishings had been removed, but in most the houses were still furnished, as if in the middle of daily life some great wind had blown all the people away. In one house the table had been set for the evening meal, complete with a centerpiece of long-wilted flowers. In another the covers had been turned down neatly in an upstairs bedroom as if for sleep. In the local mercantile store, a rotted bolt of cotton cloth was found on the counter and a price of \$1.22 rung up on the cash register. Investigators found almost \$50.00 in the cash drawer, untouched.

People in the area like to entertain tourists with the story and to hint that the town is haunted; that, they say, is why it has remained empty ever since. A more likely reason is that Momson is located in a forgotten corner of the state, far from any main road. There is nothing there that could not be duplicated in a hundred other towns except, of course, the Mary Celeste-like mystery of its sudden emptiness.

Much the same could be said for Jerusalem's Lot. In the census of 1970, 'salem's Lot claimed 1,319 inhabitants a gain of exactly 67 souls in the ten years since the previous census. It is a sprawling, comfortable township, familiarly called the Lot by its previous inhabitants, where little of any note ever took place. The only thing the oldsters who regularly gathered in the park and around the stove in Crossen's Agricultural Market had to talk about was the Fire of '51, when a carelessly tossed match started one of the largest forest fires in the state's history.

If a man wanted to spin out his retirement in a small country town where everyone minded his own business and the big event of any given week was apt to be the Ladies' Auxiliary Bake-off, then the Lot would have been a good choice. Demographically, the census of 1970 showed

a pattern familiar both to rural sociologists and to the long-time resident of any small Maine town: a lot of old folks, quite a few poor folks, and a lot of young folks who leave the area with their diplomas under their arms, never to return again. But a little over a year ago, something began to happen in Jerusalem's Lot that was not usual.

People began to drop out of sight. The larger proportion of these, naturally, haven't disappeared in the real sense of the word at all.

The Lot's former constable, Parkins Gillespie, is living with his sister in Kittery. Charles James, owner of a gas station across from the drugstore, is now running a repair shop in neighboring Cumberland. Pauline Dickens has moved to Los Angeles, and Rhoda Curless is working with the St Matthew's Mission in Portland. The list of 'undisappearances' could go on and on.

What is mystifying about these found people is their unanimous unwillingness or inability to talk about Jerusalem's Lot and what, if anything, might have happened there. Parkins Gillespie simply looked at this reporter, lit a cigarette, and said, 'I just decided to leave.' Charles James claims he was forced to leave because his business dried up with the town. Pauline Dickens, who worked as a waitress in the Excellent Cafe for years, never answered this reporter's letter of inquiry. And Miss Curless refuses to speak of 'saalem's Lot at all.

Some of the missing can be accounted for by educated guesswork and a little research. Lawrence Crockett, a local real estate agent who has disappeared with his wife and daughter, has left a number of questionable business ventures and land deals behind him, including one piece of Portland land speculation where the Portland Mall and Shopping Center is now under construction. The Royce McDougalls, also among the missing, had lost their infant son earlier

in the year and there was little to hold them in town. They might be anywhere. Others fit into the same category. According to State Police Chief Peter McFee, 'We've got tracers out on a great many people from Jerusalem's Lot--but that isn't the only Maine town where people have dropped out of sight. Royce McDougall, for instance, left owing money to one bank and two finance companies . . . in my judgment, he was just a fly-by-nighter who decided to get out from under. Someday this year or next, he'll use one of those credit cards he's got in his wallet and the repossession men will land on him with both feet. In America missing persons are as natural as cherry pie. We're living in an automobile-oriented society. People pick up stakes and move on every two or three years. Sometimes they forget to leave a forwarding address. Especially the deadbeats.' Yet for all the hardheaded practicality of Captain McFee's words, there are unanswered questions in Jerusalem's Lot. Henry Petrie, and his wife and son are gone, and Mr Petrie, a Prudential Insurance Company executive, could hardly be called a deadbeat. The local mortician, the local librarian, and the local beautician are also in the dead-letter file. The list is of a disquieting length.

In the surrounding towns the whispering campaign that is the beginning of legend has already begun. 'Salem's Lot is reputed to be haunted. Sometimes colored lights are reported hovering over the Central Maine Power lines that bisect the township, and if you suggest that the inhabitants of the Lot have been carried off by UFOS, no one will laugh. There has been some talk of a 'dark covenant' of young people who were practicing the black mass in town and, perhaps, brought the wrath of God Himself on the namesake of the Holy Land's holiest city. Others, of a less supernatural bent, remember the young men who 'disappeared' in the Houston, Texas, area some three years ago only to be discovered in grisly mass graves.

An actual visit to 'salem's Lot makes such talk seem less wild. There is not one business left open. The last one to go under was Spencer's Sundries and Pharmacy, which closed its doors in January. Crossen's Agricultural Store, the hardware store, Barlow and Straker's Furniture Shop, the Excellent Caf?, and even the Municipal Building are all boarded up. The new grammar school is empty, and so is the tri-town consolidated high school, built in the Lot in 1967. The school furnishings and the books have been moved to make-do facilities in Cumberland pending a referendum vote in the other towns of the school district, but it seems that no children from 'salem's Lot will be in attendance when a new school year begins. There are no children; only abandoned shops and stores, deserted houses, overgrown lawns, deserted streets, and back roads.