

# English

**Subject level** A-level (Activities are relevant to all three courses: Literature, Language and Literature & Language)

**Resource site** [www.wqe.ac.uk/tasteractivities](http://www.wqe.ac.uk/tasteractivities)

**Teachers** Various

**Subject context** English is all about the ways writers and speakers communicate to create meaning and to entertain, persuade or inform. We have three different A Level English courses, and there's a bit more information later to help you decide between them, but all require you to read what other people have written, to understand the methods they've used to make their writing interesting and to produce your own extended pieces of writing.

**Deadline** Start of the 2020 academic year.

**Estimated time required to complete activity** 4 - 5 hours

**Submission instructions** Complete all of the activities and submit one of the longer tasks on the fifth page.

Please bring your completed activities to your first lesson. If you do not have a laptop, tasks can be completed on pen and paper.

**Resources required** Laptop (or pen and paper)  
Internet

## Assignment details

### TASK 1: YOUR LINGUISTIC FINGERPRINTS

The aim of this task is to help you **identify** features of **your written idiolect** and **your spoken repertoire** and to **adapt a text's lexical formality**.

Your language is unique, like your fingerprints. It has many distinctive characteristics, ranging from accent and voice quality to typical gestures and much-used phrases. **Idiolect** is the linguistic (language-related) term for the unique way you speak.

**ACTIVITY 1: Identifying some of your spoken idiolect features.** Note down your answers to these questions.

- Do you have a favourite 'filler' that you use a lot when speaking– e.g. 'you know', 'I mean', 'like', 'well', 'um', 'er', ?
- Do you have particular words for 'good' and 'bad'?
- Do you have words and phrases that you like and use a lot? (What words/ phrases would people say were typical of you?)
- Are there certain words and phrases that you avoid because you dislike them?

People make different choices about the language they use. When we are speaking, we may do this unconsciously. In writing we are more likely to be aware of the different types of language we use in different situations. This range of styles is known as a **repertoire**.

**ACTIVITY 2: Your written repertoire** Number the following list in rank order: one for the type of writing that you like to do best, through to ten for your least favourite.

	Tweeting		Essay writing
	Diary writing		Letter writing
	E-mailing		Texting
	Listing		Creative writing
	Note-making on a text		Doodling

The texts in your written repertoire differ according to their level of formality. When we choose words that are more informal we are altering a text's **lexical formality**.

### **ACTIVITY 3: ADAPTING A TEXT'S LEXICAL FORMALITY**

How would you convey this information if you were writing a text message to a friend?

**Please can you inform my teacher that I am going to be late as traffic congestion has delayed my bus to College.**

Write out the text message you would send. Note the language features and level of lexical formality in your new version of the message.

### **TASK 2: Working with genre**

This task is designed to help you think about genre, meaning type or classification of text. A genre that we study in English Literature is dystopia.

#### **Activity 1: Define the following terms (look up if necessary)**

- Dystopia
- Narrative voice
- Irony
- Symbolism
- Motif
- Tone

**Activity 2: Dystopian texts.** Research and list the titles of five dystopian texts. Include films, novels and / or short stories.

Select one of your five texts and research the plot. Once you know the overall plot of the text, try and write a short summary paragraph which explains what you think the writer is trying to say about society and or humanity.

Find and save some images related to your ideas for the above task. If you're feeling creative you could make a montage of these to illustrate the ideas.

#### **Activity 3: Reading a short story**

Read the short story 'Harrison Bergeron' by Kurt Vonnegut (link below).

[https://archive.org/stream/HarrisonBergeron/Harrison%20Bergeron\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/HarrisonBergeron/Harrison%20Bergeron_djvu.txt)

This link gives you a bit more insight into the story:

[http://issaquahhighkdean.weebly.com/uploads/8/3/2/6/83262826/harrison\\_bergeron.pdf](http://issaquahhighkdean.weebly.com/uploads/8/3/2/6/83262826/harrison_bergeron.pdf)

### TASK 3: LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC APPROACHES

**Activity 1:** These tasks are designed to introduce you to the poetry of William Blake, which we study in the second year of English Language and Literature.

**Research:** Use the internet to research William Blake, focusing on his attitude to religion.

**First impressions:** Read the poem *The Garden of Love* by Blake (this can easily be found online, for example [here](#)) and record your first impressions of the poem using the PowerPoint to guide you.

**Detailed Reading:** Using the PowerPoint, answer the questions on the structure and form of the poem, as well as those on each individual stanza.

**Activity 2:** These tasks are designed to help you think about how we apply linguistic (language-based) ideas to texts.

**Look up the terms** lexis, semantics, semantic field, denotation and connotation.

Below is an advertisement for one of the perfumes in the 'London Rain' perfume range from Jo Malone London. Annotate the text to show how word choice creates **connotative meanings** associated with 'rain' which will help sell the perfume.



## **LONGER TASKS – Please choose one of these tasks to complete**

### **Task 1**

Read the following online article, which is about the way society views accents. Look up any words you need to e.g. accent, dialect, bias, prejudice.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20180307-what-does-your-accent-say-about-you?ocid=ww.social.link.email>

Write a 500 word response to the article, answering the following questions:

- What are FOUR of the main points the writer makes about attitudes to different accents in this country?
- The writer says that “humans are very quick to judge a person based on accents”. What do you think about this, and do you agree?

### **Task 2**

Write a 500 word analysis of Kurt Vonnegut’s short story ‘Harrison Bergeron’.

Try to include the following:

- Issues and ideas you think Vonnegut is discussing
- Any language techniques you think he uses to help the reader understand his ideas. Use a point, evidence and explanation formula to support your ideas.

### **Task 3**

Write a 500 word analysis: *How does Blake present attitudes and ideas in ‘The Garden of Love’?*

OR

Write a 500 word piece in which you persuade your reader to try something that you enjoy. This can be in any (non-fiction) genre you wish.

## **CHOOSING YOUR ENGLISH COURSE**

We offer three A Level English courses – your choice will depend on what you most enjoy about the subject. All three courses are 80% exam; 20% coursework.

### **English Language**

English Language is all about how language works in the world around us. You will study a range of different ways to analyse texts and conversations, including their grammar and

structure, but also the issues and debates they raise. Topics covered include language and power, language and gender, child language development and language change. For the coursework, you will conduct an investigation into language use in an area that interests you.

### **English Literature**

English Literature, with which you will already be familiar, is the study of plays, poetry and prose. We examine how writers use Literature to convey their ideas and emotions, how writers are influenced by events in their own lives, society and ideas prevalent at the time of writing. We study a Shakespeare play, a pre twentieth century drama, pre twentieth century poetry and dystopian literature. For the coursework you will analyse the work of a poet and compare a play to a 21<sup>st</sup> century novel of your choice.

### **English Language and Literature**

English Language and Literature combines elements of linguistic and literary study. You will explore a wide range of spoken and written texts, using a stylistic approach to analyse and compare them. We study an anthology of non-fiction texts as well as a play, some 18<sup>th</sup> century poetry and a 20<sup>th</sup> century novel. For the coursework you will write your own creative piece and compare a non-fiction text to a novel of your choice. One of the exam also offers the opportunity to produce creative writing.

**Look on WQE's website for detail about each course and contact us if you want more information.**

### **EXTRA READING AND RESOURCES**

The following may be useful to help you prepare for A Level English.

#### **For English Language...**

'Making the Leap into English Language' – article from the English and Media magazine.  
Our Twitter feed @WQEEnglish.

Word of Mouth Radio 4 series <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtzn>

Oxford English Dictionary's blog <https://public.oed.com/blog/>

### **For English Literature...**

'Making the Leap into English Literature' – article from the English and Media magazine.

*The Ode Less Travelled* – Stephen Fry (about how we analyse poetry)

Novels you may enjoy (coursework possibilities) include Valerie Martin's *Property*, Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Emma Donoghue's *Room* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*.

'How to study Shakespeare' <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/howtostudybard.html>

Browse through the British Library's resources on Shakespeare:

<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare>

### **For English Language and Literature...**

David Crystal's website [www.davidcrystal.com](http://www.davidcrystal.com) contains lots of resources on studying language. Read this article [this article](#), which explains the relationship between speech and writing, in particular.

Significant speeches of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/newtop100speeches.htm>

<https://www.greatspeech.co/speeches-by-women/>

Novels you may enjoy – see Literature list – these could also be chosen for Lang/Lit coursework.

Articles about William Blake <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/william-blake-radicalism> and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/sites/default/files/streetcar-named-desire-workpack.pdf>