

Subject overview for: English

1. Subject overview

The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment. (National Curriculum)

At JMHS our curriculum has been designed with this overarching aim.

Our aim is for students to (National Curriculum in bold):

- read **easily, fluently**, with **good understanding** and comprehension
- **develop the habit of reading** a breadth of texts **for information** and for **pleasure**
- **appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage**
- approach texts critically: analysing, inferring and evaluating in order to understand writers' intention
- **acquire a wide vocabulary** to facilitate reading, writing, and oracy skills
- write **clearly, accurately, coherently**, perceptively and engagingly for a range of purposes and audiences
- use **discussion in order to learn**, explaining their own views and listening to those of others both informally and formally
- use the interpretations of other scholars and critics to inform their own viewpoint and written explorations
- develop cultural capital by reading, writing and talking about lives beyond their own

English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils, therefore, who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised. (NC curriculum English)

The JMHS English Curriculum begins in Year 7 with the key knowledge areas of setting, characterisation and context (building mastery from Year 6 curriculum); this knowledge foundation subsequently builds in complexity in each year group. In this way, all knowledge is underpinned with previous knowledge and is honed, developed, and 'snowballed' in each year. Threshold knowledge: story, argument/speaking and listening, grammar, context, structure and literary knowledge has been tracked through each year group to plan for progression. Topics and texts are sequenced to be increasingly challenging through years 7 to 13. Each term has explicit curriculum goals, and students are taught the threshold knowledge encompassing reading, writing and oracy, to achieve these in sequenced components of learning, leading to end points.

All modules have reading at their core. Students read, comprehend, analyse and evaluate a rich and broad breadth of whole texts (at least one per module - both of the canon and new YA texts): a variety of forms eg poetry/fiction/drama/non-fiction are covered each term. Students will be able to use the vocabulary and style that they have been exposed to as a springboard for their own writing. Oracy is of vital importance in this model as students are encouraged to articulate their ideas, and those of others, through planned and spontaneous performance and debate. Vocabulary, both academic and subject specific, is also explicitly taught and constantly returned to secure knowledge and 'word consciousness'.

We give immediate formative assessment and enable students to correct and improve their own work; this is achieved in three ways: students self or peer mark using clear criteria linked to curriculum goals; students' work (or models) are live marked under the visualiser and teachers undertake a 'book look' after extended pieces of work, leading to group feedback, and review and improvement work.

2. Key Stage Three summary (Year 7 and Year 8)

Year 7 starts with the knowledge of setting which is primarily taught through 'Island at the End of Everything' by Kiran Millwood Hargrave as well as through extracts and poetry. In the Spring Term, we turn to characterisation in extracts such as 'Harry Potter', and 'Jane Eyre', and in 'Romeo and Juliet' by William Shakespeare. Finally, in the Summer Term, we focus on context and the fact that texts cannot be studied without considering social, historical and cultural context. We primarily consider Victorian context through Dickens, poetry, and the novel 'Smith' by Leon Garfield.

Year 8 starts with the topic 'What a writer does on purpose', this builds on setting and character learned in Year 7 and includes structure and reader response. Students read 'Bone Sparrow' by Zana Fraillon and non-fiction articles with clear attitudes to refugees; they study the emotional response a reader has. The relationship between writer and reader (which begins in Summer Term Year 7) is further explored in the Spring Term with the topic 'What a writer wants us to think', focusing on persuasive texts such as adverts and culminating in the allegory 'Animal Farm' by George Orwell. Linking to Summer Term Year 7, students consider how a reader responds to texts such as 'Merchant of Venice' by William Shakespeare, poetry and non-fiction articles on racial oppression across time, thus developing their social, historical and cultural context knowledge, as well as consolidating characterisation and setting knowledge and Shakespeare knowledge from Year 7.

Throughout both years, students write narrative, descriptive, analytical and point of view writing, using reading as a model. Students study poetry, prose, fiction and non-fiction throughout each module. Oracy is used to articulate ideas and students experiment with pause, pace and performance in a variety of contexts eg through poetry, speeches and debate.

All students choose their own independent reading book and are expected to have a 'Book in their Bag' at all times. Reading is set as weekly homework and this is monitored in English lessons and library lessons when comprehension and consistent reading are checked.

3. Key Stage Four summary

a. Year 9: Transition year

Year 9 builds further on the knowledge from Years 7 and 8. Initially, students revisit setting and character as well as narrative voice and reader response in the topic 'Writer's arsenal of techniques', reading 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee. This topic also revisits contextual awareness as well as emotional reader response and comparison. In the Spring term, the topic 'Writers' purposes' considers genre and conventions more closely, focusing on Gothic extracts and short stories such as 'The Tell-Tale Heart' by Edgar Allan Poe. This unit develops knowledge of the relationship between writer and reader and the techniques used for impact, including setting and character but also introducing genre specific techniques eg sublime. Finally, contextual knowledge is further honed in the topic 'Developing a critical voice' looking at the representation of witches across time primarily through 'The Crucible' by Arthur Miller. Here their persuasive voice is honed in their responses. Throughout this year, students continue to write narrative, descriptive, analytical and point of view writing, using reading as a model. Oracy skills are also built upon as students plan, rehearse and perform scripts and poetry as well as articulating personal interpretation.

b. Year 10 and Year 11: GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature

Year 10 covers the GCSE Literature set texts, building on the knowledge of setting, character, context, writers' intentions and techniques, comparison and reader response. Autumn Term topic is 'Social Criticism' studying 'An Inspector Calls' by J.B. Priestley and 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens, and poetry. Here they hone their knowledge of drama and the Gothic genre from Year 9. Spring Term focuses on 'Power' looking at Unseen poetry, anthology poetry focusing on comparison and techniques (hidden voices and perspectives on Power and Conflict within war) and 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare. In this way, links are made between knowledge of witches from Year 9 and previous Shakespeare texts. Summer term is entitled, 'Using your critical voice' as students finalise their knowledge of Anthology poetry, and all texts, plus building on their oracy skills by presenting a speech using persuasive devices.

Year 11 covers all assessment objectives. Autumn Term's topic is 'The writer's craft in crafting writing' and consolidates all previous knowledge of setting, character, arsenal of techniques and reader response. In Spring Term, students 'Master their critical voice' considering what a writer in non-fiction in literary texts does on purpose, honing their view of persuasive devices. Finally, in Summer term, students master all of the knowledge of writer and reader: production and reception. In Year 11, oracy skills are used to read aloud to aid understanding of tone, pace and meaning.

4. Sixth Form courses

A level English Literature

A-level texts are chosen to fit the knowledge webs and curriculum goals that have been carefully tracked through each year group since Y7 and layered up in increasing complexity. Students consider writer and reader: production and reception.

In Year 12, the first term begins with two arguably more accessible texts, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and focuses closely on context. In the second term of Y12, the focus widens to include the skill of comparing two substantial texts – *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Frankenstein*. This builds on knowledge of character and setting plus Gothic and Dystopian genre. Poetry is also taught through the study of the anthology *Poetry of the Decade* and knowledge is drawn from all previous poetry study. Finally, in the third term Y12 coursework is planned; the use of critical opinion to shape one's own reader response is introduced and students are given a free choice of two literary texts which have a point of comparison, which they study, research and write up, bringing together all knowledge garnered thus far.

Y13 aims to increase the depth and breadth of our literary studies with the introduction of more challenging texts by Shakespeare and Keats, followed by a range of poetry outside of the set texts that allows students to compare works within a long and varied poetic tradition. These challenging texts allow students to further develop the skills of academic writing, contextual consideration, comparison, and using other scholarly views to develop their own writing. While this contributes to the advanced learning of the students in Y12 and Y13, it also provides a thorough grounding for students who choose to study English Literature at undergraduate level.

5. Contribution to preparing for life in modern Britain/equalities

Topics such as discrimination and prejudice are discussed, analysed and evaluated in texts in Year 7, 8, and 9: 'Island at the end of Everything' celebrates diversity and highlights historical prejudice; 'Merchant of Venice' studies contextual prejudice; 'To Kill a Mockingbird' is a seminal novel that paved the way for the Civil Rights movement. Real life examples are considered through news paper articles and global charity campaigns. Students learn the value of tolerance.

Care has been taken to ensure diversity of chosen texts as far as possible.

Students are encouraged to articulate their views and have empathy for others through the study of characterisation, whether it be Subhi in a refugee camp; Juliet in a patriarchal society or Smith living on the poverty line in 18th century London. The reading of allegories (An Inspector Calls) and protest poems (Blake's London) stimulate discussion and awareness of inequality for example the class divide and the plight of the poor across time. All literary texts allow students to consider and adjust their moral compass.

Students are also taught to be critically aware of writers and their intentions; they study: bias; persuasion in advertisements; biased representation of groups of people; propaganda; Fake News. Literary texts such as Merchant of Venice and 'Bone Sparrow' reveal the importance of Democratic rule of law.

Finally, reading is an essential everyday skill that prepares all students for life in modern Britain; we foster reading for pleasure by giving all students the opportunity to read a wide range of genres, forms and styles of writing. In this way they enrich their own lives and those of others.

6. Contribution to careers provision

English covers the fundamentally valuable skills of reading, writing and oracy that are essential for all occupations. The subject improves students' abilities to communicate in a clear and purposeful way.

Through studying a wide range of texts across key stages 3 and 4, students gain a wider understanding of journalism, letter writing skills, persuasive texts and reviews.