

RE: Year 11: Changes to GCSE English Literature for September 2021 ONLY

Dear parents/carers,

I am writing to you to explain about changes to the GCSE English Course this year, and what this means for the Year 11 curriculum here at Lymm High School.

You will be aware that last year's school closure resulted in significant lost learning time for students. While we worked hard as a department to ensure that students' learning experience could be continued, with lessons taking place online, OFQUAL, the exam boards regulator, has advised the streamlining of GCSE English components to recognise the disruption caused.

In line with this decision, OFQUAL have recommended that the following changes be made to reduce the course content that students need to prepare in advance of the exams:

<p style="text-align: center;">English Language GCSE</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Content largely unchanged)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">English Literature GCSE</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Some optional content)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will study the full range of components, completing both existing exam papers in full • Students will be assessed via the same examination structure as those sitting English GCSE in Summer 2019, with students sitting 2 1-hour 45 minute exam papers that test reading of unseen texts and creative writing • However, Spoken Language study, for which students receive a separate endorsement graded at Pass, Merit or Distinction will no longer require video recorded evidence to moderate the grades submitted by teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students must study a Shakespeare text (at Lymm this is Macbeth, which students have studied during the first term of Year 11) • Students must also study 2 of the 3 optional components from a choice of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Modern Drama or Prose – Students have <u>already studied</u> An Inspector Calls by J.B Priestley ➤ 19th Century novel – At Lymm, we study A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens ➤ A poetry Cluster of 15 poems – At Lymm, we study the 'Power and Conflict' cluster • All students will also study Unseen Poetry – a written response to an unseen poem, and comparison with another by theme

Headteacher: Mr Gwyn Williams

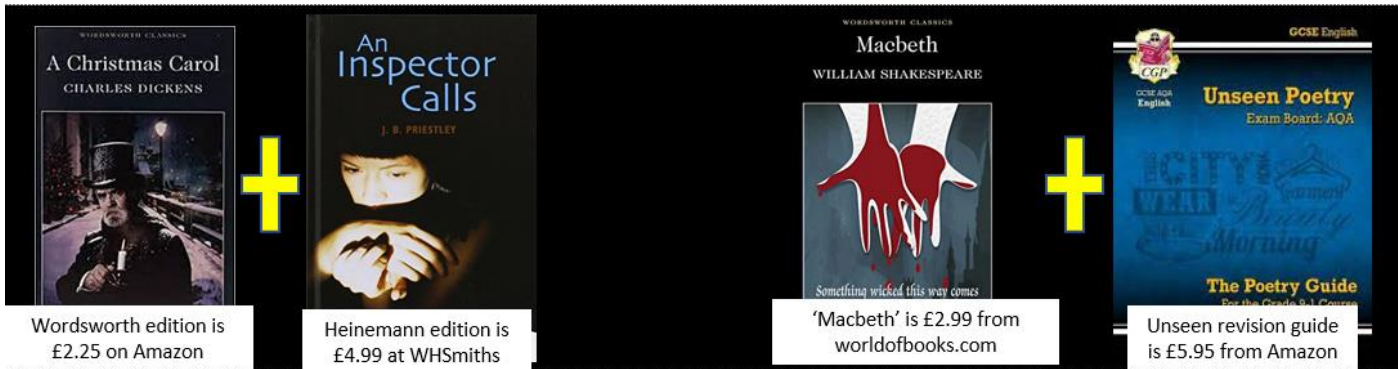
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At Lymm, we have made the decision to study the following English Literature texts for assessment in Summer 2022:

- **Shakespeare – Macbeth**
- **Modern Drama or Prose – An Inspector Calls** by J.B Priestley
- **The 19th Century Novel – A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens

All students must also study **Unseen Poetry**



We have based our decision to study the 19th Century novel (A Christmas Carol), rather than the poetry anthology (Power and Conflict) on several years of experience under this new specification, and the fact that this component supports a deeper mastery of the exam skills required, and is **significantly less demanding than the revision of 15 poems and comparison skills.**

Specifically, we have based this decision on the following benefits for students which will ensure the best possible outcomes in both GCSE subjects:

- ✓ The **exam questions for A Christmas Carol and Macbeth share the same structure** and therefore require the same exam approach from students. This will ensure we can practise and 'overlearn' this method frequently for maximum confidence
- ✓ **A Christmas Carol has a simpler exam approach**, in that students have to manage just one story and one plot, rather than the meaning and themes of 15 poems. It also requires students to write an essay on one text, rather than a comparison response.
- ✓ **Examiners reports indicate that students answer most impressively on the 19th Century novel** overall, due to the complexity of ideas handled. It also provides a supportive transition to A' Level English Literature study.
- ✓ **The 19th Century novel will improve students' confidence in understanding 19th Century Non-fiction.** This is the type of text they have to read and understand independently in the English Language GCSE exam.
- ✓ For **A Christmas Carol** there are **fewer complex ideas and a smaller range of quotations** to learn. All English Literature exams are 'closed book', so this will ease the load on students' memory and revision. Continuing with the poetry would mean that students would have to learn approximately 15 quotations, rather than approximately 10–15.
- ✓ **Any practice with the poetry cluster in Year 10, will give students a good advantage for the unseen poetry component.**

In addition, we have gathered student voice from our Summer 2019 students to ensure we are making the best possible decision for Year 11. Those surveyed told us that for the Poetry Anthology:

- *"The number of poems to revise was quite a difficult task because it's not just quotes, remembering what themes each poem represented and what question it could fit was hard"*
- *"Too much to revise"*
- *"I felt that there was too much to learn for each of the individual poems"*
- *"It was a lot of information to remember and the comparison was a fairly difficult question."*

We can appreciate the pressure that Year 11 students, as well as their parents, face as they prepare for their GCSE exams. The decision to study the poetry anthology in Year 10 was in response to the fact that much of this learning was taking place online, and this component was significantly less challenging to deliver to students via this medium. Had we been aware that we were working towards a situation where content would be removed from the syllabus for Summer 2022, we would have anticipated and made different decisions.

As I am new in post as Head of English, I can only respond to the situation from this point moving forwards, but please rest assured that students are at the very heart of decisions made. These decisions have been made, not to disadvantage or demotivate students, but because we absolutely believe in our professional judgement that this will produce the best possible outcomes in the summer.

We are aware that time may have been spent on poetry revision, and some students may have purchased revision guides for this component. If this is the case, students should bring their poetry revision guide into school, and we will order a replacement equivalent for A Christmas Carol. In addition, the English department will be holding extra revision sessions for A Christmas Carol to ensure that students who want to consolidate their learning have further opportunities to do so.

Exam boards are now responding to, and implementing, the guidance from OFQUAL, and we therefore await further information from AQA at this stage. Should there be any further changes, I will ensure that students and their parents are kept up to date with any pertinent information.

Thank you for your continued support. I wish your child the best of luck in their studies this year.

Mrs C Hartley
Head of English Faculty