

---

# GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

(8702)

---

**Specification**

For teaching from September 2015 onwards  
For GCSE exams in 2017 onwards

---

Version 1.3 28 September 2022





# Contents

---

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Why choose AQA for GCSE English Literature	5
1.2 Support and resources to help you teach	6
<b>2 Specification at a glance</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 Subject content</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel	11
3.2 Modern texts and poetry	11
3.3 Skills	13
<b>4 Scheme of assessment</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 Aims and learning outcomes	15
4.2 Assessment objectives	15
4.3 Assessment weightings	16
<b>5 General administration</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1 Entries and codes	17
5.2 Overlaps with other qualifications	17
5.3 Awarding grades and reporting results	17
5.4 Re-sits and shelf life	17
5.5 Previous learning and prerequisites	18
5.6 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion	18
5.7 Safeguarding	19
5.8 Working with AQA for the first time	19
5.9 Private candidates	19

---

## Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to the specification.

# 1 Introduction

---

## 1.1 Why choose AQA for GCSE English Literature

### A specification designed for you and your students

We have worked closely with teachers to design our specification to inspire, challenge and motivate every student, no matter what their level of ability, while supporting you in developing creative and engaging lessons.

We have developed assessment strategies that support students' achievement in an untiered, closed book context through the use of extract-based questions in the assessment of the 19th-century novel and the Shakespeare plays.

### Choice and flexibility

Our range of texts has been chosen to cater for the needs of teachers and students in all educational contexts. There are texts that will be familiar to you as well as new ones that will inspire young readers. A wide choice in each category means that there is something that will appeal to every teacher and every student.

### Skills-based approach

The specification takes a skills-based approach to the study of English literature that is consistent across the genres. Our experienced team has produced question papers and mark schemes that allow you to get back to inspirational literature teaching and allow students of all abilities to achieve their best on every question.

It offers excellent preparation for AS and A-level English Literature, as well as giving students a grounding in a wide variety of literature that will stay with them for life.

### Teach Language and Literature together

The specification is fully co-teachable with GCSE English Language. Students who study both will greatly benefit from the transferable skills learnt across the two subjects.

### We're behind you every step of the way

Our mark schemes and marking processes have been developed to ensure that the assessment is fair and consistent: with AQA you can rest assured that your students will receive the grade that fairly represents their attainment and reflects the skills that they have demonstrated.

We are supporting you in delivering our specification with high quality, meaningful resources.

Learn more about our English qualifications at [aqa.org.uk/english](https://www.aqa.org.uk/english)

---

## 1.2 Support and resources to help you teach

We know that support and resources are vital for your teaching and that you have limited time to find or develop good quality materials. So we've worked with experienced teachers to provide you with a range of resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

### Teaching resources

We have too many English Literature resources to list here so visit [aqa.org.uk/8702](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8702) to see them all. They include:

- example long-term planning grids to help you plan your GCSE courses
- training courses to help you deliver AQA English Literature qualifications
- subject expertise courses for all teachers, from newly-qualified teachers who are just getting started to experienced teachers looking for fresh inspiration
- teaching guides to help you teach our specification with confidence.

### Preparing for exams

Visit [aqa.org.uk/8702](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8702) for everything you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports
- sample papers and mark schemes
- Exampro: a searchable bank of past AQA exam questions
- exemplar student answers with examiner commentaries.

### Analyse your students' results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

Find out which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. ERA, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching. Register at [aqa.org.uk/era](https://www.aqa.org.uk/era)

For information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit [aqa.org.uk/results](https://www.aqa.org.uk/results)

### Keep your skills up to date with professional development

Wherever you are in your career, there's always something new to learn. As well as subject-specific training, we offer a range of courses to help boost your skills:

- improve your teaching skills in areas including differentiation, teaching literacy and meeting Ofsted requirements
- help you prepare for a new role with our leadership and management courses.

You can attend a course at venues around the country, in your school or online – whatever suits your needs and availability. Find out more at [coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk](https://www.coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk)

### Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/7201](https://www.aqa.org.uk/7201)

You can talk directly to the English Literature subject team:

E: [english-gcse@aqa.org.uk](mailto:english-gcse@aqa.org.uk)

T: 0161 953 7504



# 2 Specification at a glance

## Assessments

All assessments are closed book: any stimulus materials required will be provided as part of the assessment.

All assessments are compulsory.

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel
<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Shakespeare plays</a> (page 11)</li><li>• <a href="#">The 19th-century novel</a> (page 11)</li></ul>
<p><b>How it's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes</li><li>• 64 marks</li><li>• 40% of GCSE</li></ul>
<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><b>Section A Shakespeare:</b> students will answer one question on their play of choice. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from the play and then to write about the play as a whole.</p> <p><b>Section B The 19th-century novel:</b> students will answer one question on their novel of choice. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from the novel and then to write about the novel as a whole.</p>





Paper 2: Modern texts and poetry
<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Modern prose or drama texts</a> (page 11)</li><li>• <a href="#">The poetry anthology</a> (page 12)</li><li>• <a href="#">Unseen poetry</a> (page 13)</li></ul>
<p><b>How it's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• written exam: 2 hour 15 minutes</li><li>• 96 marks</li><li>• 60% of GCSE</li></ul>
<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><b>Section A Modern texts:</b> students will answer one essay question from a choice of two on their studied modern prose or drama text.</p> <p><b>Section B Poetry:</b> students will answer one comparative question on one named poem printed on the paper and one other poem from their chosen anthology cluster.</p> <p><b>Section C Unseen poetry:</b> Students will answer one question on one unseen poem and one question comparing this poem with a second unseen poem.</p>



# 3 Subject content

## 3.1 Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel

### 3.1.1 Shakespeare

Students will study one play from the list of six set texts. Students should study the whole text.

**Choose one of:**

- *Macbeth*
- *Romeo and Juliet*
- *The Tempest*
- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *Much Ado About Nothing*
- *Julius Caesar*.

### 3.1.2 The 19th-century novel

Students will study one novel from the list of seven set texts. Students should study the whole text.

**Choose one of:**

Author	Title
Robert Louis Stevenson	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>
Charles Dickens	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>
Charles Dickens	<i>Great Expectations</i> (1867)
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
Mary Shelley	<i>Frankenstein</i> (1831)
Jane Austen	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	<i>The Sign of Four</i>

## 3.2 Modern texts and poetry

### 3.2.1 Modern texts

Students will study one from a choice of 12 set texts, which include post-1914 prose fiction and drama. Students should study the whole text.

**Choose one of:**

## Drama

Author	Title
JB Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Willy Russell	<i>Blood Brothers</i> (musical version)
Alan Bennett	<i>The History Boys</i> ( <b>Last exam 2024</b> )
Dennis Kelly	<i>DNA</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i> (play script) ( <b>Last exam 2024</b> )
Shelagh Delaney	<i>A Taste of Honey</i>
Chinonyerem Odimba	<i>Princess &amp; The Hustler</i> ( <b>First teaching 2023, first exam 2025</b> )
Winsome Pinnock	<i>Leave Taking</i> ( <b>First teaching 2023, first exam 2025</b> )

## Prose

Author	Title
William Golding	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>
AQA Anthology	<i>Telling Tales</i>
George Orwell	<i>Animal Farm</i>
Kazuo Ishiguro	<i>Never Let Me Go</i> ( <b>Last exam 2024</b> )
Meera Syal	<i>Anita and Me</i>
Stephen Kelman	<i>Pigeon English</i>
Kit de Waal	<i>My Name is Leon</i> ( <b>First teaching 2023, first exam 2025</b> )

### 3.2.2 Poetry

Students will study one cluster of poems taken from the AQA poetry anthology, *Poems Past and Present*. There is a choice of three clusters, each containing 15 poems. The poems in each cluster are thematically linked and were written between 1789 and the present day.

The titles of the three clusters are:

- Love and Relationships
- Power and Conflict
- Worlds and Lives (**First teaching 2023, first exam 2025**)

Students should study all 15 poems in their chosen cluster and be prepared to write about any of them in the examination.

### 3.2.3 Unseen poetry

In preparing for the unseen poetry section of the examination students should experience a wide range of poetry in order to develop their ability to closely analyse unseen poems. They should be able to analyse and compare key features such as their content, theme, structure and use of language.

## 3.3 Skills

In studying the set texts students should have the opportunity to develop the following skills.

### Reading comprehension and reading critically

- *literal and inferential comprehension*: understanding a word, phrase or sentence in context; exploring aspects of plot, characterisation, events and settings; distinguishing between what is stated explicitly and what is implied; explaining motivation, sequence of events, and the relationship between actions or events
- *critical reading*: identifying the theme and distinguishing between themes; supporting a point of view by referring to evidence in the text; recognising the possibility of and evaluating different responses to a text; using understanding of writers' social, historical and cultural contexts to inform evaluation; making an informed personal response that derives from analysis and evaluation of the text
- *evaluation of a writer's choice of vocabulary, grammatical and structural features*: analysing and evaluating how language, structure, form and presentation contribute to quality and impact; using linguistic and literary terminology for such evaluation
- *comparing texts*: comparing and contrasting texts studied, referring where relevant to theme, characterisation, context (where known), style and literary quality; comparing two texts critically with respect to the above

### Writing

- *producing clear and coherent text: writing effectively about literature for a range of purposes such as*: to describe, explain, summarise, argue, analyse and evaluate; discussing and maintaining a point of view; selecting and emphasising key points; using relevant quotation and using detailed textual references
- *accurate Standard English*: accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.



# 4 Scheme of assessment

---

Find past papers and mark schemes, and sample papers for new courses, on our website at [aqa.org.uk/pastpapers](http://aqa.org.uk/pastpapers)

This specification is designed to be taken over two years with all assessments taken at the end of the course.

GCSE exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2017 and then every May/June for the life of the specification.

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all exams in May/June in a single year. All assessments must be taken in the same series.

Our GCSE exams in English literature include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- draw together their knowledge, skills and understanding from across the full course of study
- provide extended responses.

All materials are available in English only.

## 4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

Courses based on this specification should encourage students to develop knowledge and skills in reading, writing and critical thinking. Through literature, students have a chance to develop culturally and acquire knowledge of the best that has been thought and written. Studying GCSE English Literature should encourage students to read widely for pleasure, and as a preparation for studying literature at a higher level.

Courses based on this specification should also encourage students to:

- read a wide range of classic literature fluently and with good understanding, and make connections across their reading
- read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas
- develop the habit of reading widely and often
- appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage
- write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English
- acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including the grammatical terminology and other literary and linguistic terms they need to criticise and analyse what they read.

## 4.2 Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all GCSE English Literature specifications and all exam boards.

The exams will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:
  - maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response
  - use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.
- AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.
- AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.
- AO4: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

## Weighting of assessment objectives for GCSE English Literature

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx %)		Overall weighting (approx %)
	Paper 1	Paper 2	
AO1	15	22.5	37.5
AO2	15	27.5	42.5
AO3	7.5	7.5	15
AO4	2.5	2.5	5
Overall weighting of components	40	60	100

## 4.3 Assessment weightings

The marks awarded on the papers will be scaled to meet the weighting of the components. Students' final marks will be calculated by adding together the scaled marks for each component. Grade boundaries will be set using this total scaled mark. The scaling and total scaled marks are shown in the table below.

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel	64	x1	64
Modern texts and poetry	96	x1	96
		Total scaled mark:	160



# 5 General administration

You can find information about all aspects of administration, as well as all the forms you need, at [aqa.org.uk/examsadmin](http://aqa.org.uk/examsadmin)

## 5.1 Entries and codes

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers and certification.

Every specification is given a national discount (classification) code by the Department for Education (DfE), which indicates its subject area.

If a student takes two specifications with the same discount code, Further and Higher Education providers are likely to take the view that they have only achieved one of the two qualifications. Please check this before your students start their course. Where two specifications have the same discount code, only one of them will be counted for the purpose of the School and College Performance tables – DfE's rules on 'early entry' will determine which one.

Qualification title	AQA entry code	DfE discount code
AQA GCSE in English Literature	8702	FC4

This specification complies with Ofqual's:

- *General Conditions of Recognition* that apply to all regulated qualifications
- GCSE qualification conditions that apply to all GCSEs
- GCSE English Literature conditions that apply to all GCSEs in this subject.

The Ofqual qualification accreditation number (QAN) is 601/4447/6

## 5.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

There are no overlaps with any other AQA qualifications at this level.

## 5.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

The qualification will be graded on a nine-point scale: 1 to 9 – where 9 is the best grade.

Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade 1 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

## 5.4 Re-sits and shelf life

Students can re-sit the qualification as many times as they wish, within the shelf life of the qualification.

---

## 5.5 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Students are not required to have taken any particular qualifications before taking this course. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools and colleges.

However, as English literature is taught in progressively greater depth over the course of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, GCSE outcomes may reflect or build upon subject content that is typically taught at Key Stage 3. There is no expectation that teaching of such content should be repeated during the GCSE course where it has already been effectively taught at an earlier stage.

## 5.6 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

General qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study. Therefore our qualifications must assess a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to see if any of the skills or knowledge required present any possible difficulty to any students, whatever their ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. If any difficulties were encountered, the criteria were reviewed again to make sure that tests of specific competences were only included if they were important to the subject.

As members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) we participate in the production of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational qualifications*. We follow these guidelines when assessing the needs of individual students who may require an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment. This document is published on the JCQ website at [jcq.org.uk](http://jcq.org.uk)

### Students with disabilities and special needs

We can make arrangements for disabled students and students with special needs to help them access the assessments, as long as the competences being tested are not changed. Access arrangements must be agreed **before** the assessment. For example, a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader but not for a student who does not read Braille.

We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student.

If you have students who need access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, you can apply using the Access arrangements online service at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

### Special consideration

We can give special consideration to students who have been disadvantaged at the time of the exam through no fault of their own – for example a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as the death of a relative. We can only do this **after** the exam.

Your exams officer should apply online for special consideration at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

For more information and advice about access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration please see [aqa.org.uk/access](http://aqa.org.uk/access) or email [accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk](mailto:accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk)

## 5.7 Safeguarding

Some of the content within this curriculum may generate discussions or disclosures from students which raise safeguarding concerns. If this happens, please follow your centre's safeguarding policy to arrange support.

## 5.8 Working with AQA for the first time

If your school or college has not previously offered any AQA specification, you need to register as an AQA centre to offer our exams to your students. Find out how at [aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre](https://www.aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre)

If your school or college is new to this specification, please let us know by completing an Intention to enter form. The easiest way to do this is via e-AQA at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](https://www.aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

## 5.9 Private candidates

A private candidate is someone who enters for exams through an AQA-approved school or college but is not enrolled as a student there.

If you are a private candidate you may be self-taught, home-schooled or have private tuition, either with a tutor or through a distance learning organisation. You must be based in the UK.

If you have any queries as a private candidate, you can:

- speak to the exams officer at the school or college where you intend to take your exams
- visit our website at [aqa.org.uk/examsadmin](https://www.aqa.org.uk/examsadmin)
- email: [privatecandidates@aqa.org.uk](mailto:privatecandidates@aqa.org.uk)

## Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at

You can talk directly to the English Literature subject team:

E: [english-gcse@aqa.org.uk](mailto:english-gcse@aqa.org.uk)

T: 0161 953 7504