

## Curriculum overview

## Year 7 – Islands and Adventures

### *Exploring the Writer's Craft*

The Year 7 course will introduce students to the craft of the writer and foster a love of stories. Through reading and enjoying a range of texts grouped around the theme of Islands and Adventures, students will gain an insight into many of the skills and techniques that underpin the discipline of creative writing. Over the course of the year, students will put their learning into practice by compiling a Creative Portfolio, showcasing their very best work from each term. The portfolio work will give students the opportunity to work imaginatively across a range of formats, ranging from transactional writing styles to poetry. At the end of the year, students will spend time auditing and indexing their portfolio, and there will be an opportunity to present the work in a formal context.

### **Course structure**

**Autumn term:** Students begin the Year 7 course by reading excerpt from *The Odyssey*, accompanied by a sequence of work on the topic of 'Expeditions'. In addition to the reading text, students will study a range of nonfiction writing styles including journals and articles. The Expeditions work culminates in a Creative Portfolio project that involves students designing and planning their own expedition, which is then documented through a collection of creative texts.

**Spring term:** Our work on Islands and Adventures now takes us to the exotic climes of the Pacific as we read Kiran Milwood Hargrave's *The Island at the End of Everything*, a beautiful and harrowing story about a girl born in a leper colony who is forced to leave her mother and start a new life in an orphanage on a neighbouring island. Students will develop skills of reading analysis introduced in the autumn term, exploring characterization and imagery as well as practising annotation. The Creative Portfolio project will involve students producing a collection of letters that expand the world of *The Island at the End of Everything*.

**Summer term:** Our Islands and Adventures journey reaches its conclusion with Shakespeare's *Pericles* – a tale of shipwreck, adventure, and wonder. Students will gain an overview of the plot of the play in addition to reading and studying key scenes in depth. Alongside the Shakespeare work, students will be introduced to nature poetry, including classic works by Romantic era poets such as Blake and Shelley. The final Creative Portfolio project gives students the chance to demonstrate the wide range of creative skills that they will have acquired over the course of the year by planning and creating a poetry collection that charts Pericles' adventures.

**Homework:** Students are set weekly homework tasks which focus on writing skills. Each week, students read about an important writing technique and then put this technique into practice in a short piece of creative work.

**Enrichment:** In addition to the compulsory homework tasks, students will be provided with a reading list of eight books that deepen and expand upon the course theme of Islands and Adventures, introducing students to a wider range of voices and writing styles. *All reading list titles are available through the school library or the English department.*

**Assessment:** Assessment is ongoing throughout the course. Students will receive oral feedback on their work during lessons, and each portfolio project will include at least one piece of teacher marked work. The Creative Portfolio is the primary mode of assessment throughout the year. Students will also learn how to track and manage their own learning by maintaining an index sheet which details where certain key skills have been explored or demonstrated in their exercise book. At the end of the academic year, the library will host an exhibition of Creative Portfolio work.

## Year 8 – Lights in the Darkness

### *Developing a Creative Voice*

The Year 8 course encourages students to see themselves as developing writers. Building on the broad knowledge of writers' techniques acquired in Year 7, students will now be given the opportunity to experiment with an individual style, as well as sustaining a creative intention across some longer pieces of writing. The theme for the course is *Lights in the Darkness*: we will read and study a range of stimulating texts in which hope and love endure in places of horror and despair, from the trenches of the First World War to grim fantasy worlds where villains stalk in the shadows. Students will once again compile and curate a Creative Portfolio over the course of the year, in which they will showcase their developing skills as a writer.

Autumn Term: We begin the Year 8 course by studying Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful*: a story of growing up and the strength of family bonds that follows a pair of brothers from rural Devon to the trenches of WWI. Students will explore the context surrounding the novel – studying a range of war propaganda texts and learning the skills of rhetoric and persuasive language, as well as being introduced to the First World War poetry of Wilfred Owen. Students' Creative Portfolio work this term will consist of a range of nonfiction texts linked to *Private Peaceful*, expanding on the world of the novel and demonstrating a range of rhetorical techniques.

Spring Term: In the Spring Term, we delve deeper into the 'darkness' aspect of our course theme by exploring the horror genre, focusing on Carlos Ruiz Zafon's chilling tale *The Prince of Mist*, a story of three plucky teenagers who must outwit the charismatic and terrifying Dr Cain – a shapeshifting villain intent on revenge. Our Creative Portfolio work this term will involve students producing a collection of 'microfiction' in the horror style. These will be short pieces of creative writing that focus on important aspects of the genre, such as mood and atmosphere, suspense, pace and the characterization of a villain.

Summer Term: The Year 8 course reaches its conclusion with a challenging unit of work that involves reading Neil Gaiman's Carnegie Medal-winning *The Graveyard Book* – a dark tale about an orphaned child growing up in a graveyard – alongside extracts from Rudyard Kipling's classic story *The Jungle Book*, which it was directly inspired by. Through reading these two works side-by-side, students will gain an insight into the idea of literary homage, as well as strengthening their skills of comparison. Students will complete their most challenging and imaginative portfolio work so far in the second part of the term: they will conceive, plan and write their own homage to Kipling and Gaiman in the form of an episodic narrative that charts the adventures of a child growing up in an 'enclosed world' of students' own devising .

**Homework:** Students are set weekly homework tasks which focus on writing and grammar skills. Each week, students read about an important writing technique or aspect of grammar and then have the opportunity to demonstrate the skill or knowledge they have acquired.

**Enrichment:** In addition to the compulsory homework tasks, students will be provided with a reading list of eight books that deepen and expand upon the course theme of *Lights in the Darkness*, introducing students to a wider range of voices and writing styles. *All reading list titles are available through the school library or the English department.*

**Assessment:** Assessment is ongoing throughout the course. Students will receive oral feedback on their work during lessons, and each portfolio project will include at least one piece of teacher marked work. The Creative Portfolio is the primary mode of assessment throughout the year. Students will also learn how to track and manage their own learning by maintaining an index sheet which details where certain key skills have been explored or demonstrated in their exercise book. At the end of the academic year, the library will host an exhibition of Creative Portfolio work.

## Year 9 – Identities in Conflict

### *Developing a Critical Voice*

The Year 9 course takes students further into the realms of academic literary analysis, providing a firm foundation for the challenges of GCSE. The Creative Portfolio of the past two years now becomes the Academic Portfolio, and students will be required to demonstrate a range of academic skills over the course of the year, including annotation, close analysis, evaluation and essay writing. This will culminate in an extended spoken assessment at the end of the year in which students will have the opportunity to formally present and discuss their academic work. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to nurture and develop their own critical opinions on the texts they have studied, as well as learning how to sustain an academic argument. The course theme is *Identities in Conflict*: we will explore a range of stimulating texts that address ideas of social positioning and the individual, taking in ideas of social class, prejudice, race and gender and considering the barriers to equality that still exist in society today.

Whole-year study: This year, students will gain valuable experience of higher-level literary study by reading and exploring Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* – a complex work that raises issues of prejudice and antisemitism. Our work on this play will be spaced throughout the year, and will culminate in an extended essay on Shylock, the 'villain' of the play: is it more accurate to describe him as a victim? In addition to this, students will explore an anthology of poetry and selected nonfiction texts that develop the course theme of *Identities in Conflict*.

Autumn term: We introduce our course theme of *Identities in Conflict* by reading S. E. Hinton's seminal young adult novel *The Outsiders*, a story of rival teenage gangs in Midwestern USA, published when its author was only 17 years old. While studying the book, we will practise the key academic skills of annotation and close analysis, leading up to our first Academic Portfolio project which will involve planning, drafting and refining a whole-text essay on a key theme in the book. Following this, students will explore the short story form through reading, analysis and comparison of two short works by celebrated literary authors: *The Destructors* by Graham Greene and *Eveline* by James Joyce. These stories allow students to explore questions of teenage rebellion, responsibility and gender expectations. Our Academic Portfolio work for this unit will include a challenging essay that allows students to demonstrate skills of evaluation and comparison, focusing on how each story explores different aspects of young people's experience.

Spring Term: Our exploration of the short story form continues in the spring term, with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's seminal feminist text *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a thought-provoking tale that invites students to consider issues of female oppression within relationships; we follow this with Henrik Ibsen's classic play *A Doll's House*, which explores similar themes within a very different medium.

Summer term: The Year 9 course concludes with a study of a piece of classic 20<sup>th</sup> century drama – Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which was the first play written by a black woman to be produced on Broadway. This challenging text invites students to explore the struggles faced by a working-class black family in 1950s Chicago, leading to challenging discussion around issues of racism and the barriers faced by the black community in the USA during this time period.

**Homework:** Students are set weekly homework tasks which focus on writing and grammar skills. Each week, students read about an important writing technique or aspect of grammar and then have the opportunity to demonstrate the skill or knowledge they have acquired.

**Enrichment:** In addition to the compulsory homework tasks, students will be provided with a reading list of eight books that deepen and expand upon the course theme of *Identities in Conflict*, introducing students to a wider range of voices and writing styles. *All reading list titles are available through the school library or the English department.*

**Assessment:** Assessment is ongoing throughout the course. Students will receive oral feedback on their work during lessons, and each portfolio project will include at least one piece of teacher marked work. The Academic Portfolio is the primary mode of assessment throughout the year. Students will also continue to track and manage their own learning by maintaining an index sheet which details where certain key academic skills have been explored or demonstrated in their exercise book. At the end of the academic year, all students will have a 10-minute spoken assessment in which they will present and discuss the work in their Academic Portfolio.

## **Years 10 and 11 – Tragedy and Transience; Beauty and Critique**

### *Studying with Insight and Independence*

Over the course of Years 7-9, students will have acquired, practised and demonstrated all of the key creative and academic skills that will be required for their GCSE examinations in Year 11, so they will now be fully equipped to commence work on the GCSE syllabus. Students will work towards two GCSE qualifications: GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature, both administered by the Eduqas examination board. For the Literature qualification, students will study three texts, in which some aspects of the previous year's theme of Identities in Conflict can be discovered: Willy Russell's play *Blood Brothers*, Shakespeare's *Othello* and Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. In addition to this, students will study a range of poetry from the Romantic era to the present day, and will spend an extensive period of time refining and developing their creative and transactional writing skills. Throughout the GCSE course, students will be encouraged to value all of their work for its own sake and never as just a means to an end: our aim as a department is that students will see that the journey to get to the exams is valuable in and of itself – it is the period in which they will, in fact, produce their very best work. For this reason, students will once again produce an Academic Portfolio, containing a range of analysis pieces based on the Literature texts in addition to creative writing, and over which they will have a greater amount of freedom and control than previous years. This portfolio will be once again appraised as part of a spoken dialogue which will also serve as the students' compulsory GCSE Speaking and Listening assessment.

**Course structure:** Due to the high content demand of the Literature course, teaching is spaced and interleaved across the two years. This allows for greater embedding of key knowledge and ensures that ongoing revision is built in to the course. By the end of Year 10, students will have completed in-depth studies of *Othello* and *Blood Brothers* and will have fully annotated the poetry anthology. Significant time at the end of Year 10 and the beginning of Year 11 is given over to creative prose writing, with the reading of *A Christmas Carol* being completed by the end of the autumn term of Year 11. Exam preparation commences in the Spring Term of Year 11.

**Homework:** Students in Year 10 and 11 are expected to manage their own studies, and will be encouraged to make use of the English Department's extensive bank of original study resources accessed through the VLE/student drive (see below). Homework tasks from Year 10 onwards will be in audio form: students will be required to record two pair or group 'podcast-style' discussions (up to 10 minutes long) every half term. It is up to the class teacher or the students themselves to set these tasks.

**Study support:** Students in Year 10 and 11 will be encouraged to develop effective independent study practices. A range of support is available to students through the VLE/student drive, including an array of study resources created by the English Department. Through the VLE, students will also have access to a comprehensive series of podcasts in which Harrow Way English teachers, as well as high-achieving ex-students, discuss and explain key aspects of the GCSE course content. In Year 11, students will be encouraged to attend weekly revision classes which run for an hour after school every Thursday.

**Assessment:** Assessment is ongoing throughout the course. Students will receive oral feedback on their work during lessons, and will be encouraged to submit portfolio work regularly to their teachers for marking. The Academic Portfolio is the primary mode of assessment throughout Year 10; this will culminate in a 10-minute spoken assessment in which students will present and discuss their portfolio work in a formal context. In addition to being a formal appraisal of the portfolio, this spoken dialogue will constitute the unweighted Speaking and Listening endorsement for the English Language GCSE. Students in Year 11 will undertake a full sequence of mock GCSE examinations in February, with the final examinations taking place at the end of May/beginning of June.