

YEAR 7: CURRICULUM RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

THEME: SEA OF ADVENTURES

The Year 7 English curriculum aims to develop students as confident, curious and thoughtful readers, writers and communicators. Across the year, students encounter a diverse range of voices, genres and experiences, developing their ability to engage critically with texts while finding and developing their own voice. The curriculum follows a conceptual journey from heroes and heroism to courage, resilience, identity and ultimately home and belonging. Students begin by considering what makes someone a hero through *I Am Malala*, before challenging and developing these ideas through Emily Wilson's translation of Homer's *The Odyssey*. They then explore character, tension and resilience in *The Island at the End of Everything* by Kiran Millwood Hargrave, before concluding the year with Phil Porter's drama interpretation of a true story, *The Boy with Two Hearts* and the theme of home.

Alongside the study of literature, students progressively develop the core skills required for success in English: reading closely, analysing writers' choices, discussing ideas confidently, writing for different purposes and audiences, and making deliberate choices about language and structure. Throughout the year, students are encouraged to question, interpret, articulate and create, building the knowledge, confidence and independence needed for the challenges of Key Stage 3 and beyond.

TRANSITION UNIT: *I AM MALALA*

Why do we teach this unit?

The transition from primary to secondary school is an important point in students' development as readers, writers and communicators. We want students to begin Year 7 by exploring a text that provides an accessible introduction to ideas of identity, courage and personal experience, while also giving them opportunities to develop their own voices.

I Am Malala provides a powerful starting point because Malala's experiences allow students to consider what it means to be a hero and whether heroism necessarily involves extraordinary or superhuman qualities. Through studying Malala's experiences, students will explore ideas of courage, education, equality and standing up for what we believe in. The text also provides an opportunity to introduce students to a voice and experience that may be very different from their own.

The unit deliberately places oracy and writing alongside reading. Students will discuss their own ideas about heroism before developing these ideas into a formal speech about a person they consider to

be a hero. This provides an early opportunity for students to develop confidence in expressing an opinion, selecting evidence and considering the impact of their language choices on an audience.

The unit therefore establishes some of the key principles that underpin the Year 7 curriculum: reading widely, discussing ideas thoughtfully, developing an individual voice and understanding that literature can introduce us to experiences and perspectives beyond our own.

About this unit?

Teaching will consist of whole-class reading and discussion of selected extracts from *I Am Malala*. Students will explore Malala's experiences and consider the qualities that make her an inspirational figure. Discussion will focus particularly on the concept of heroism, encouraging students to question their initial assumptions about what a hero is and to consider whether heroism is defined by actions, character, courage or sacrifice.

Students will be introduced to the ways in which writers can communicate viewpoints and influence an audience. They will examine how Malala presents her experiences and ideas before applying these techniques to their own writing.

The unit will culminate in students writing a speech about someone they consider to be a hero. This will allow them to draw on their reading and discussion while developing their own ideas and voice. Particular attention will be given to audience, purpose, structure, rhetorical devices and the selection of appropriate vocabulary.

The transition unit will also establish expectations for discussion, annotation, extended writing and responding thoughtfully to the ideas of others, providing a foundation for the units that follow.

Learning Aims

By the end of this unit of work, students should be able to:

- Read and understand key extracts from *I Am Malala*;
- Understand some of the key events and ideas in Malala's story;
- Explore the concept of heroism and consider different definitions of what makes someone a hero;
- Discuss and express personal opinions confidently;
- Identify and explain how a writer presents ideas and viewpoints;
- Understand some of the conventions of speech writing;
- Use rhetorical devices to influence an audience;
- Structure a speech effectively for a specific audience and purpose;
- Select vocabulary and sentence structures deliberately to create an impact.

Assessment

Academic/Transactional Writing Assessment:

- Speech writing.

Students should demonstrate their understanding of the conventions of speech writing, including consideration of audience and purpose, appropriate structure, rhetorical devices and deliberate vocabulary choices.

THE ODYSSEY

Why do we teach this unit?

Having begun Year 7 by considering the idea of heroism through *I Am Malala*, students will move to one of the foundational texts of Western literature: Homer's *The Odyssey*. The text provides an opportunity to explore how ideas of heroism have changed and how writers construct heroic characters.

The Odyssey is particularly valuable because Odysseus is not a straightforward hero. He demonstrates courage, intelligence and resilience, but he is also capable of arrogance, deception and poor judgement. This complexity gives students an opportunity to move beyond simply identifying characters as "good" or "bad" and towards forming and supporting their own interpretations.

The unit also introduces students to the conventions of epic narrative and mythology. Through the episodes involving the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis, students will encounter monsters, supernatural threats, journeys and tests of character. These provide an engaging context in which to develop students' understanding of narrative structure, characterisation, tension and the writer's craft.

The creative assessment also builds directly on the Year 7 transition unit. Having written about an existing hero, students will now create their own episode in which Odysseus must overcome a new challenge, requiring them to apply their understanding of the character and the conventions of epic storytelling.

About this unit

Teaching will be based around selected extracts from *The Odyssey*, including Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops and his encounters with Scylla and Charybdis. Students will read and discuss the episodes, considering how Homer creates danger, suspense and excitement.

Alongside their reading, students will explore the conventions of heroism and consider how these are demonstrated by Odysseus. They will be encouraged to debate the question: Is Odysseus a hero? This will provide opportunities for students to develop their ability to form interpretations, select evidence and justify their ideas.

Students will also examine how the writer creates memorable characters and exciting narrative episodes. They will then use these ideas in their own creative writing, imagining a "missed chapter" from *The Odyssey* in which Odysseus encounters a new situation that he must overcome.

This creative response will allow students to develop their understanding of narrative structure while continuing to develop the writing skills introduced in the transition unit.

Learning Aims

By the end of this unit of work, students should be able to:

- Understand the key events and characters in selected episodes from *The Odyssey*;
- Understand some of the conventions of epic narrative and Greek mythology;
- Explore different ideas about heroism;
- Form and justify an opinion about whether Odysseus is a hero;
- Analyse how Homer creates character, danger and tension;
- Use evidence from the text to support interpretations;
- Understand and use conventions of narrative writing;
- Create an original episode inspired by the style and conventions of *The Odyssey*.

Assessment

Academic Assessment: Is Odysseus a hero?

Creative Writing Assessment: Write a "missed chapter" from *The Odyssey*, imagining a new challenge for Odysseus to overcome.

Students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of Odysseus as a character and make use of appropriate narrative conventions, including characterisation, setting, action, tension and dialogue where appropriate.

YEAR 7 – THE ISLAND AT THE END OF EVERYTHING

Why do we teach this unit?

Having explored the idea of heroism and adventure through *I Am Malala* and *The Odyssey*, students will encounter a very different kind of journey in *The Island at the End of Everything*. The novel

provides an opportunity to move from the fantastical adventures of epic literature towards a story rooted in real historical circumstances and human relationships.

The novel's focus on Ami, her mother and the community of Culion Island allows students to explore ideas of family, prejudice, isolation and resilience. The text also provides a valuable opportunity to develop students' empathy by encouraging them to consider experiences that may be very different from their own.

The novel's vivid descriptive writing provides a particularly strong vehicle for developing students' understanding of the writer's craft. Students will examine how writers create characters, tension and atmosphere through deliberate choices of language and structure.

The unit therefore continues the development of students' analytical skills while maintaining opportunities for creative engagement with the text.

About this Unit

Teaching will consist of whole-class reading and discussion of the novel, focusing on the core skills of retrieval, analysis and evaluation. Students will annotate and discuss key extracts, with particular attention given to the characterisation of Zamora and the ways in which the writer creates tension.

Students will consider how characters are constructed through their actions, language, relationships and the responses of other characters. They will also explore how the writer controls information and uses language and structure to create tension for the reader.

Alongside analytical work, students will develop their descriptive writing, drawing on the vivid settings and atmosphere of the novel as a stimulus for their own writing.

Learning Aims

By the end of this unit of work, students should be able to:

- Read and enjoy a complete novel as a class;
- Understand the key events, characters and relationships in the novel;
- Analyse how a writer develops a character;
- Analyse how a writer creates tension;
- Use evidence from a text to support analytical responses;
- Develop understanding of the historical context of leprosy and leper colonies;
- Develop descriptive writing using deliberate choices of language and structure;
- Develop empathy for characters and perspectives different from their own.

Assessment

- Analyse the characterisation of Mr. Zamora.
- Analyse how the writer creates tension in a selected extract.
- Produce a piece of descriptive writing, demonstrating deliberate choices of language, vocabulary and structure.

YEAR 7 – *THE BOY WITH TWO HEARTS*

Why do we teach this unit?

The final unit of Year 7 develops the curriculum's focus on journeys by exploring a very different kind of journey: the experience of displacement, migration and the search for safety and belonging. *The Boy with Two Hearts* provides students with an opportunity to consider what the idea of home means and why home can be connected to people, relationships, memories and a sense of belonging as much as to a physical place.

The text also introduces students to experiences of migration and displacement, encouraging students to consider perspectives and experiences beyond their own. The emotional focus of the text provides opportunities to develop empathy while also introducing students to more complex ideas about identity, family, courage and belonging.

The text builds on the analytical skills developed throughout Year 7. Students will continue to explore character, theme, language and structure while developing their ability to respond independently to a range of reading and writing tasks.

The focus on Home also provides a natural culmination to the Year 7 journey. Students began the year considering what makes someone a hero and end by considering what makes somewhere feel like home, bringing together ideas of identity, relationships, courage and belonging.

About this unit

Teaching will consist of whole-class reading and discussion of *The Boy with Two Hearts*. Students will explore the narrative and its key characters while considering the theme of home from a range of perspectives.

Students will develop their ability to analyse how writers present characters, relationships and themes, making connections between the text and the wider ideas explored throughout the year. Discussion will play an important role in helping students to explore different interpretations and perspectives.

The unit will continue to develop students' confidence with both analytical and creative writing. Assessment tasks will follow the established Year 7 reading and writing foci, allowing students to demonstrate the skills they have developed across the year.

Learning Aims

By the end of this unit of work, students should be able to:

- Read and understand a complete play/text;
- Explore the theme of home and consider different ideas about belonging;
- Develop empathy for characters and experiences different from their own;
- Analyse how writers present character, relationships and themes;
- Support interpretations with appropriate textual evidence;
- Develop confidence in analytical writing;
- Apply the writing skills developed throughout Year 7 to a range of purposes and audiences.

Assessment

Assessment tasks will follow the established Year 7 reading and writing foci, allowing students to demonstrate their ability to analyse the text and respond creatively and/or analytically to its themes, characters and ideas.