

YEAR 8: CURRICULUM RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

THEME: LIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS

The Year 8 English curriculum aims to develop increasingly confident, independent and critical readers, writers and communicators, building on the foundations established in Year 7. Across the year, students encounter a range of challenging texts and genres through which they progressively develop their ability to understand, analyse, evaluate and create. The curriculum begins with *The Prince of Mist* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, where students develop their understanding of how writers create tension and build confidence in supporting ideas through reading, discussion and collaborative exploration. This is developed through Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where students explore conflict, deepen their understanding of context and move towards constructing a sustained analytical argument. Students then broaden their understanding of the writer's craft through a study of Gothic literature, comparing conventions across a range of texts, developing interpretations and evaluating complex questions such as who the real villain is. The study of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* then provides a focused exploration of how writers use structure to control the reader and create tension, before students apply their learning by crafting their own Gothic short stories.

Oracy, collaboration and Tier 2 vocabulary are embedded throughout the year, providing regular opportunities for students to articulate, develop and challenge ideas, build on the contributions of others and develop the academic language needed to express increasingly sophisticated interpretations. The curriculum therefore provides a clear progression from understanding and identifying, to analysing and explaining, to evaluating and arguing, and ultimately to applying knowledge independently through creative writing, preparing students for the increasing demands of Key Stage 3 while developing their confidence, independence and appreciation of the writer's craft.

THE PRINCE OF MIST BY CARLOS RUIZ ZAFON

Why do we teach this unit?

The Prince of Mist provides an engaging introduction to Year 8, allowing students to build on the reading, writing and discussion skills developed in Year 7 while increasing the level of challenge and independence expected of them. The novel's mystery, supernatural elements and developing sense of danger provide a strong vehicle for exploring how writers create and sustain tension. Students are encouraged to become increasingly analytical readers, moving beyond identifying what happens to considering how and why a writer creates a particular response in the reader.

The novel also provides extensive opportunities for students to develop their spoken language through discussion, prediction, collaborative interpretation and debate. These activities encourage

students to articulate ideas clearly, respond to the ideas of others and build on contributions made by their peers. A sustained focus on Tier 2 vocabulary supports students in developing the academic language required to discuss and analyse increasingly complex texts.

About this unit

Students will study *The Prince of Mist* through whole-class reading, discussion and close analysis of key extracts. They will explore how Carlos Ruiz Zafón creates tension through language, characterisation, setting and structure, developing their ability to support interpretations with relevant textual evidence.

The unit will provide regular opportunities for paired and group discussion, encouraging students to rehearse ideas orally before committing them to writing. Students will also encounter and practise Tier 2 vocabulary throughout the unit, developing their ability to use precise academic language when discussing both the text and their own ideas.

The unit culminates in an analytical response exploring how the writer creates tension, alongside an article-writing task which allows students to apply their understanding of audience, purpose, structure and language.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Develop confidence when reading and discussing a challenging whole-class novel.
- Analyse how writers create tension through language, characterisation, setting and structure.
- Select and use relevant textual evidence.
- Develop and articulate interpretations through discussion.
- Build on and challenge the ideas of others during collaborative work.
- Develop their use and understanding of Tier 2 vocabulary.
- Understand the conventions of article writing.
- Adapt language and structure for a specific audience and purpose.

Assessment

- Analysis and evaluation of how tension is created and sustained across extracts
- Article Writing

POWERFUL WARRIORS

Why do we teach this unit?

Powerful Warriors allows students to explore how literature and language can construct ideas about power, heroism and leadership. The unit builds on students' developing ability to analyse characterisation and language, while introducing them to a wider range of voices and forms. Students are encouraged to question what makes someone powerful, respected or heroic, rather than accepting these ideas at face value.

The unit also strengthens students' ability to use their own voices. Through regular opportunities for discussion, debate and performance, students develop confidence in articulating ideas, responding to others and adapting their communication for different purposes. This supports the continued development of the reading, writing and oracy skills expected across Key Stage 3.

The unit therefore provides a bridge between analysing the ways in which others use language and making deliberate choices in students' own writing and speech. It encourages students to become increasingly confident, critical and purposeful communicators.

About this unit

Students will study *Beowulf* through Headdon's translation of the original text, developing an appreciation of storytelling and exploring the characterisation of Beowulf and Grendel. They will consider how the hero and villain are presented and evaluate Beowulf's character.

Alongside the study of *Beowulf*, students will explore speeches from powerful figures including Queen Elizabeth I, Richard III and Henry V, as well as Aragorn from *The Lord of the Rings*. They will examine how these speakers use their voices to establish authority, command respect, motivate and inspire their audiences.

Students will develop their oracy through discussion, debate and performance, alongside a range of creative activities. They will apply their understanding of powerful speakers when writing their own speech, making deliberate choices about language and structure for a particular audience and purpose.

The unit culminates in an evaluative response on Beowulf's characterisation and a speech-writing task, with creative tasks providing further opportunities to apply the skills developed throughout the unit.

Students will:

- Develop an appreciation of storytelling through the study of *Beowulf*.
- Explore how writers construct powerful and memorable characters.

- Analyse the characterisation of Beowulf as a hero and Grendel as a villain.
- Consider different interpretations of what makes a hero.
- Analyse how speakers use language to establish authority and command respect.
- Explore how powerful voices can be used to motivate, inspire and bring about change.
- Analyse how language and rhetoric are shaped by audience, purpose and context.
- Develop confidence in expressing, developing and challenging ideas through discussion and performance.
- Use increasingly sophisticated vocabulary when discussing and writing about texts.
- Craft and structure an effective speech for a specific audience and purpose.
- Make deliberate choices about language, rhetoric and structure to influence an audience.
- Apply reading and analytical skills independently in creative and evaluative writing.

Assessment

- **Reading:** Analyse and evaluate the characterisation of Beowulf as a powerful hero.
- **Writing:** Craft and deliver a speech which uses language and rhetorical techniques to motivate, inspire and influence an audience.
- **Oracy:** Participate in discussion and performance, developing and communicating ideas with increasing confidence and control.
- **Creative Writing:** Apply understanding of storytelling, characterisation and powerful voices through creative tasks.

Shakespeare Study - The Tempest

Why do we teach this unit?

The *Tempest Study* unit develops students' understanding of how Shakespeare creates complex characters and explores ideas of power, control, morality and villainy. Through extracts alongside a developing understanding of the whole play, students will examine the relationship between Prospero and Caliban and consider how Shakespeare encourages the audience to judge each character.

The unit provides an important foundation for the study of Shakespeare's *Othello* at KS4, particularly through its exploration of villainy, manipulation, responsibility and the ways in which writers construct morally complex characters. Students will develop their ability to form and evaluate interpretations, supporting their ideas with relevant textual evidence.

Alongside reading and analysis, students will develop their spoken and written language through discussion, debate and collaborative interpretation. Creative writing opportunities will allow students to apply their understanding of Shakespeare's use of language and structure, making deliberate choices about sentence variation, vocabulary and structural techniques to suit purpose and audience.

About this unit

Students will:

- Study extracts from *The Tempest* while developing an understanding of the whole play.
- Explore the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, considering their conflicting perspectives and experiences.
- Analyse how Shakespeare presents character, power, control and villainy.
- Evaluate who is the more villainous character: Prospero or Caliban.
- Develop interpretations through discussion, debate and the use of relevant textual evidence.
- Explore how Shakespeare's presentation of villainy provides a foundation for the study of Iago in *Othello*.
- Apply their understanding of language and structure to creative writing.
- Experiment with sentence variation, vocabulary and structural choices to create deliberate effects and suit purpose.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Develop a secure understanding of *The Tempest* through the study of key extracts and the whole-text narrative.
- Analyse Shakespeare's presentation of Prospero and Caliban.
- Explore how language, characterisation and structure shape the audience's response.
- Understand how writers construct complex and morally ambiguous villains.
- Develop and evaluate interpretations supported by relevant textual evidence.
- Explore different perspectives through discussion, debate and collaborative interpretation.
- Develop confidence in expressing, challenging and refining ideas through oracy.
- Make deliberate choices about vocabulary, sentence structure and organisation in their own writing.
- Use a range of sentence variations and structural techniques to create effects and suit purpose and audience.
- Review and improve their own writing.

Assessment

Reading: Analyse Shakespeare's presentation of Prospero or Caliban, with a focus on characterisation.

Evaluation: Consider and evaluate who is the most villainous character in *The Tempest*: Prospero or Caliban.

Writing: Produce a piece of creative writing inspired by the play, demonstrating deliberate use of language, sentence variation and structure to suit purpose and create specific effects.

Gothic Study

Why do we teach this unit?

The Gothic Study unit develops students' understanding of how genre conventions are established and adapted across different writers and texts. Students explore how writers use characterisation, setting, imagery, narrative perspective and structure to create fear, suspense, uncertainty and psychological disturbance.

Building on earlier work on tension, students encounter increasingly complex Gothic texts, including extracts from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. These texts provide opportunities to explore questions of morality, responsibility, good and evil, and the nature of the villain.

The unit moves from analysis to application. Students examine how Poe structures *The Tell-Tale Heart* to control pace, tension and the reader's response before applying these techniques in their own Gothic writing. Discussion, debate and collaborative interpretation support the development of increasingly sophisticated academic and Tier 2 vocabulary.

About this unit

Students will:

- Explore key conventions of Gothic literature and how writers adapt them.
- Analyse how writers create atmosphere, suspense and tension.
- Study Mary Shelley's presentation of the Monster in *Frankenstein* and evaluate who the real villain is.
- Explore Gothic conventions and psychological disturbance in Poe's *The Raven*.
- Analyse Poe's use of first-person narration, repetition, pace, sentence structure and revelation in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.
- Compare how different writers manipulate Gothic conventions and the reader's response.
- Apply techniques from studied texts to plan, write and refine an original Gothic narrative.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Identify and understand key Gothic conventions.
- Analyse language, characterisation, structure and narrative perspective.

- Explain how writers create atmosphere and sustain tension.
- Develop interpretations supported by relevant textual evidence.
- Evaluate different perspectives and interpretations.
- Compare writers' approaches to Gothic conventions.
- Use increasingly precise and sophisticated vocabulary when discussing texts.
- Develop confidence in expressing, challenging and refining interpretations.
- Plan and structure an effective Gothic narrative.
- Make deliberate choices about language, sentence structure, pace and tension.
- Review and improve their own writing.

Assessment

Reading: Analyse Mary Shelley's presentation of the Monster in *Frankenstein*.

Evaluation: Consider and evaluate who the real villain is in *Frankenstein*.

Poetry: Explore Gothic conventions and effects in Poe's *The Raven*.

Writing: Write an original short Gothic story which demonstrates an understanding of Gothic conventions and deliberately creates and sustains tension.