

YEAR 9: CURRICULUM RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

THEME: IDENTITIES IN CONFLICT

The Year 9 English curriculum aims to prepare students for the increasing academic demands of Key Stage 4 while continuing to develop them as confident, independent and thoughtful readers, writers and communicators. Across the year, students encounter a range of texts, voices and perspectives through which they develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of character, conflict, identity, prejudice, discrimination and the ways writers present ideas. The curriculum provides a clear progression from the analytical skills developed in Years 7 and 8 towards the independence and rigour expected at GCSE. Students begin with *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, developing their ability to analyse characterisation and tension before applying their understanding of conflict to a whole-text analytical essay. They then study Diverse Voices poetry, encountering a range of poets and perspectives while being introduced explicitly to GCSE-style questions and developing the skills needed to approach unseen and unfamiliar poetry with increasing confidence. This preparation continues through Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where the focus shifts from the broader concept of conflict explored in Year 8 to the specific theme of violence, allowing students to deepen their understanding of Shakespeare, context, character and dramatic methods. The year concludes with *A Raisin in the Sun*, where students explore prejudice, discrimination, identity and the impact of social and historical context, developing their ability to consider how writers present complex social issues.

Oracy, collaboration and Tier 2 vocabulary remain embedded throughout the year, providing regular opportunities for students to articulate and challenge interpretations, build on the ideas of others and develop the academic language required for increasingly sophisticated analysis. The curriculum therefore moves students from analysing individual aspects of a text, to sustaining whole-text arguments, to applying GCSE-style reading skills, evaluating writers' choices and considering complex contextual ideas, ensuring that students enter Year 10 with greater independence, confidence and readiness for GCSE study.

THE OUTSIDERS BY S.E. HINTON

Why do we teach this unit?

The Outsiders provides students with an engaging introduction to Year 9 and allows them to build on the analytical skills developed across Years 7 and 8. The novel explores identity, belonging, loyalty, social division and conflict, providing students with opportunities to consider how characters are shaped by their circumstances and relationships with others.

The text provides a strong vehicle for developing increasingly sophisticated analysis of characterisation and tension. Students will move beyond identifying techniques towards explaining how writers' choices influence the reader and contribute to the development of the wider narrative.

The novel also allows students to explore conflict at both an individual and societal level. This provides a natural progression towards a whole-text response, requiring students to select evidence from across the novel and construct a sustained argument rather than focusing on a single extract.

About this unit

Students will study *The Outsiders* through whole-class reading, discussion and analysis of key extracts. They will explore how S.E. Hinton develops characters and creates tension, considering the ways in which language, structure and narrative perspective influence the reader.

Students will regularly discuss interpretations collaboratively, allowing them to rehearse ideas before developing them independently in writing. The continued focus on Tier 2 vocabulary will support students in expressing increasingly precise ideas about character, conflict and the writer's methods.

The unit culminates in analytical responses focusing on characterisation and tension, before students develop these skills further through a whole-text essay exploring how conflict is presented across the novel.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Develop confidence in reading and discussing a whole novel.
- Analyse how Hinton presents and develops characters.
- Analyse how writers create and sustain tension.
- Select relevant evidence from across a text.
- Develop interpretations through discussion and collaboration.
- Construct a sustained whole-text argument.
- Use increasingly precise Tier 2 vocabulary in analytical responses.
- Explain how language, structure and narrative choices affect the reader.

Assessment

- Reading: Analyse how Hinton presents a character.
- Reading: Analyse how Hinton creates tension.
- Whole-text essay: Analyse how conflict is presented throughout *The Outsiders*.

ROMEO AND JULIET BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Why do we teach this unit?

The Year 9 study of *Romeo and Juliet* builds on students' previous experience of Shakespeare while providing greater depth and preparing them for the expectations of GCSE literature. The focus on violence allows students to revisit the idea of conflict explored through *The Outsiders* while developing a more specific and sophisticated understanding of how violence operates within a text.

Shakespeare presents violence as both physical and social, exploring its relationship with masculinity, honour, family loyalty and power. Students will consider how violence affects individuals and the wider community and how Shakespeare uses it to drive the development of the tragedy.

The unit also develops students' understanding of context, encouraging them to use contextual knowledge to deepen their interpretation of Shakespeare's choices. Rather than treating context as an isolated area of knowledge, students will consider how attitudes towards honour, masculinity, family and violence influence the characters and events of the play.

About this unit

Students will study key scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, exploring how Shakespeare presents violence through characterisation, language and dramatic methods. They will consider the escalation of violence throughout the play and its consequences for both individuals and society.

Students will explore relevant contextual ideas, including attitudes towards honour, masculinity, family, social hierarchy and violence. Discussion and collaborative interpretation will allow students to explore different readings of the play before developing increasingly independent analytical responses.

The unit provides an opportunity for students to consolidate the analytical and essay-writing skills developed earlier in Year 9, applying them to Shakespeare and beginning to work with the level of precision expected at GCSE.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Develop confidence in reading and interpreting Shakespeare.
- Understand the key events and relationships within the play.
- Explore how Shakespeare presents violence and its consequences.
- Analyse Shakespeare's use of language and dramatic methods.
- Understand relevant historical and social context.
- Use context to develop, rather than replace, textual analysis.
- Develop and challenge interpretations through discussion.
- Select appropriate evidence to support an argument.

- Construct sustained analytical responses using increasingly sophisticated vocabulary.

Assessment

- Whole-text/extended analytical response: Analyse how Shakespeare presents violence in *Romeo and Juliet*.

DIVERSE POETRY UNIT

Why do we teach this unit?

The Diverse Voices poetry unit broadens students' experience of poetry by introducing them to a range of poets, perspectives and experiences. Students encounter voices that reflect different identities, cultures, backgrounds and experiences, encouraging them to consider how poetry can communicate individual and collective perspectives.

The unit also represents an important step towards GCSE study. Students will begin working explicitly with GCSE-style questions, developing the ability to respond independently to unfamiliar poems and to select and analyse evidence with increasing precision.

The range of poetry allows students to revisit analytical skills developed through their study of literature while applying them to shorter and more concentrated texts. Students will consider how poets use language, structure and form to communicate ideas and create effects, while developing their confidence in forming interpretations.

About this unit

Students will study a range of poems from diverse poets, exploring how different writers communicate experiences, identities and perspectives. The unit will encourage students to make connections between poems while also recognising the distinctive choices made by individual poets.

Students will be introduced to GCSE-style questioning and will gradually develop their ability to independently approach questions, select evidence and construct analytical responses.

Oracy will remain central to the unit. Students will regularly discuss interpretations, compare responses and challenge or build on the ideas of others before developing their own written responses. Tier 2 vocabulary will continue to support students in expressing increasingly sophisticated ideas about poetic methods and meaning.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Develop confidence in reading a range of poetry.
- Explore a range of diverse voices and perspectives.
- Analyse how poets use language, structure and form.
- Develop interpretations supported by relevant evidence.
- Compare how different poets communicate ideas.
- Respond to GCSE-style questions.
- Develop confidence in approaching unfamiliar poems.
- Use increasingly precise analytical and Tier 2 vocabulary.
- Develop independent responses through discussion and collaborative rehearsal.

Assessment

- A series of GCSE-style poetry questions, including analytical and comparative responses.

A RAISIN IN THE SUN BY LORRAINE HANSBERRY

Why do we teach this unit?

The play *A Raisin in the Sun* provides students with an opportunity to explore complex ideas about prejudice, discrimination, identity, family and aspiration while developing their understanding of how literature can reflect and challenge the society in which it is produced.

The play introduces students to experiences of racial discrimination and social inequality and provides an important opportunity to explore perspectives that may be different from their own. Through the experiences of the Younger family, students will consider the ways in which prejudice and discrimination can affect individuals, families and communities.

The unit also develops students' ability to use context meaningfully within literary analysis. Students will explore the historical and social circumstances surrounding the play and consider how these contexts inform Hansberry's presentation of character, conflict and social issues.

As the final literature unit before students enter Year 10, *A Raisin in the Sun* provides an opportunity to consolidate the analytical skills developed throughout KS3 and to move towards more independent, nuanced interpretations.

About this unit

Students will study *A Raisin in the Sun* through close reading, discussion and analysis of key scenes. They will explore the experiences of the Younger family and consider how Hansberry presents prejudice and discrimination alongside wider ideas of identity, family, aspiration and opportunity.

Students will develop their understanding of the social and historical context of the play and will consider how this context influences Hansberry's choices as a writer.

As throughout Year 9, students will have regular opportunities to discuss and debate interpretations collaboratively before developing their own analytical responses. The continued focus on Tier 2 vocabulary will help students articulate increasingly complex ideas about social issues, characterisation and context.

Learning Aims

Students will:

- Develop confidence in reading and interpreting a challenging play.
- Explore prejudice, discrimination, identity and social inequality.
- Analyse how Hansberry presents characters and relationships.
- Understand the historical and social context of the play.
- Use contextual knowledge to develop textual interpretations.
- Analyse the writer's use of language, structure and dramatic methods.
- Explore different perspectives through discussion and debate.
- Develop independent and sustained analytical responses.
- Use increasingly sophisticated Tier 2 vocabulary to communicate interpretations.

Assessment

- Analytical responses exploring how Hansberry presents prejudice and/or discrimination.
- Extended analytical responses incorporating context, characterisation and the writer's methods