



# Preparing for A-Level English Language



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## Introduction:

We would very much like to welcome you onto the A Level English Language programme of study in September. You have chosen to study a course that will not only build upon your skills developed at GCSE, but also will encourage you to think critically and prepare for whatever your next steps may be. The course content of A-Level, however, is significantly different to that of GCSE so in order to make an informed decision about your progression, it is important that you thoroughly prepare.

This booklet is broken down into two key sections covering aspects of Language that you might like to investigate and think about. Each section contains wider reading recommendations, possible research questions and some activities to help you make a strong start in September.

English Language covers a wide range of topics and you may find this initially quite daunting. However, the field of English Language is varied and wide, and as a result, lots of people like discussing it! Hopefully this guide will help you with some starting points to ease the transition from GCSEs to A Level.

## Course details: AQA English Language

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-7701-7702-SP-2015.PDF>

*You should read this document in more detail, but the overview is provided below.*

### **Paper 1: Language, the Individual and Society**

#### **What's assessed?**

- Textual Variations and representations
- Children's language development (age 0-11)
- Methods of language analysis are integrated into the activities

#### **How will it be assessed?**

- Written exam – 2 hours 30 minutes
- 100 marks
- 40% of the A-Level

#### **Questions**

- Section A: Textual Variations and Representations. Two texts (one contemporary and one older text) linked by topic or theme.
  - A question requiring analysis of an older text (25 marks)
  - A question requiring analysis of a second text (25 marks)
  - A question requiring comparison of the two texts (20 marks)

- Section B: Children’s Language Development. A discursive essay on children’s language development, with a choice of two questions where the data provided will focus on spoken, written or multimodal language (30 marks)

## **Paper 2: Language Diversity and Change**

### **What’s assessed?**

- Language diversity and change
- Language discourses
- Writing skills
- Methods of language analysis are integrated into the activities

### **How will it be assessed?**

- Written exam – 2 hours 30 minutes
- 100 marks
- 40% of the A-Level

### **Questions**

- Section A: Diversity and Change. One question from a choice of two.
  - Either – an evaluative essay on language diversity (30marks)
  - Or: an evaluative essay on language change (30 marks)
- Section B: Language Discourses. Two texts about a topic linked to the study of diversity and change.
  - A question requiring analysis of how the texts use language to present ideas, attitudes and opinions (40 marks)
  - A directed writing task linked to the same topic and the ideas in the texts (30 marks)

## **Non-Examined Assessment**

### **What’s assessed?**

- Language Investigation
- Original Writing
- Methods of language analysis are integrated into the activities

### **How will it be assessed?**

- Word count: 3,500 words
- 100 marks
- 20% of A-Level

- Assessed by teachers
- Moderated by AQA

#### Tasks?

- A language investigation (2,000 words excluding data)
- A piece of original writing and commentary (1,500 words total)

### From GCSE to A Level:

The shift from GCSE to A Level is often based upon the idea of independence. In English Language, the expectations will most likely be that you will take on a greater responsibility for your learning. What this means is that you will be having to come up with your own opinions and ideas about texts, discuss ideas without prompting and complete essays with fewer restrictions on how you approach the question compared with GCSE. You will be expected to complete work independently and quite often in advance of each lesson. You may also be required to deliver things such as short presentations and participate in seminars (discussion and debate-based learning).

## Preparation Tasks

### **Task 1 - Glossary of terms:**

The most challenging aspect of A Level English Language is getting to grips with the huge amount of terminology that you will be expected to know and use accurately. Start by creating a working glossary document so that you can collect all the key terms you learn in one place, making it easier to revise in the future.

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-7701-7702-GLOSSARY.PDF>

Don't be put off by the amount of terminology in this document – by the end of the course, you will be able to use everything confidently.

You should create this revision document in a format that suits your preferred style of revision.

### **Task 2 - Radio 4's 'Word of Mouth' programme:**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz/episodes/player>

Available on BBC iPlayer. In this half hourly programme, Michael Rosen discusses various sorts of language from broad areas, such as the use of slang and language linked to gender identity, to more niche areas such as the naming of diseases and clichés in football commentary

### **Task 3 - Ted Talks:**

[https://www.ted.com/playlists/228/how\\_language\\_changes\\_over\\_time](https://www.ted.com/playlists/228/how_language_changes_over_time)

Listen to all of the talks and explore the following questions. When you have completed all of the talks, choose one of the following topics in bold to investigate further.

<b>Txting is killing language. JK!!!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are your views on the way that texting (and social media in general) has influenced language?</li><li>• What are the key differences between the way we use language in speech and the way we use it in language?</li><li>• Look at the way the speaker discusses the use of the phrase 'LOL.' How far do you agree with his assertion that the role of 'LOL' has changed? Do you still use this technique?</li></ul> <p><b>Investigation: What are the key features of the way you use language in text messages and social media? What affects the way you use language in these situations?</b></p>
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<p><b>Go ahead, make up new words!</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How far do you agree with the idea that we are pre-programmed to apply certain grammatical rules such as plurals?</li> <li>• According to the talk, what are the different ways of creating new words?</li> <li>• Look at the new words that have been added to the Oxford English Dictionary (google 'new words list' and they will appear). What methods have been used?</li> <li>• <b>Investigation: Try to create a new word and see if you can track its usage. Perhaps think about the ways this could be done (social media as a platform). Think about the gap you are trying to fill and how you will get the word to spread around different speakers.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>How language transformed humanity.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How essential is language to social learning?</li> <li>• Pagel presents an argument for a global language. What are your thoughts about creating a single global language? What are the potential benefits of such a situation? What are the potential downsides to this situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>Investigation: Pagel discusses the idea that language is subversive and that there are certain words you cannot say. Discuss the words that are considered 'dangerous' or 'taboo' in modern society. How has this changed over time? Are there words that could be used 50 years ago that are considered inappropriate now? Why has this changed?</b></p>
<p><b>What our language habits reveal.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the different types of verb that Pinker discusses?</li> <li>• Why might speakers choose to use euphemistic or metaphorical phrases for certain events or ideas?</li> <li>• Pinker discusses the use of language to create implicature (implying meaning but not saying it directly). In what ways have you used or heard implicature in different settings or situations?</li> </ul> <p><b>Investigation: Look at different political speeches and identify how language has been used to convey or reinforce certain ideologies or values. How do politicians use implicature to affect the audience's response? What values do they assume their audiences hold?</b></p>
<p><b>Don't kill your language!</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This talk is in a different language with subtitles. What were your initial responses to this? Did this make you less likely to want to engage with the talk? What do you think that reveals about the way we respond to different languages?</li> <li>• To what extent do you feel that language is an important part of culture?</li> <li>• What might make someone give up their native tongue in favour of a different language?</li> </ul> <p><b>Investigation: Research a country that has English as a primary language alongside other national languages – e.g. South Africa, Jamaica or Singapore. How does this country use English? How did English arrive in the country? What effects has English had on the native languages?</b></p>

<p><b>What makes a word real?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, when should a word be added to the standard dictionary? What criteria do you think it should fulfil before it is added?</li> <li>• Do you think any words should be banished? What criteria would a word have to fulfil in order for it to be threatened with 'banishment'?</li> <li>• Can you write a definition of what makes a word real?</li> </ul> <p><b>Investigation: Select three new slang words that you think your English teacher needs to know in order to be able to communicate effectively with your age group. Prepare the dictionary definitions for your words along with examples of them in use.</b></p> <p><b>Justify why you have selected these words over any others.</b></p>
<p><b>What is a snollygoster?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How important is it that the debates in Parliament are available for people to read?</li> <li>• How important are titles for a profession?</li> <li>• To what extent do you agree with Forsyth's view that reality shapes words more than words shape reality?</li> </ul> <p><b>Investigation: Visit <a href="https://hansard.parliament.uk/">https://hansard.parliament.uk/</a> and look at the ways in which language is used in Parliament. Which elements of language use are particularly interesting?</b></p>

#### **Task 4 – Wider Reading**

There are a lot of books written about English Language. Some of the most accessible include:

- David Crystal: *The Story of English in 100 Words; How Language Works; The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language* (in fact, most books by this author are accessible and interesting. Have a look in your local library for them.)
- Bill Bryson: *Mother Tongue*
- There are also some really useful blogs to have a look at:
  - <https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/> - gives some interesting insights into new words and the changing uses of existing words.
  - <http://flashfictiononline.com/main/> - useful website for looking at short pieces of creative writing. This will prove useful as you start preparing for coursework.
  - <https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language> - interesting blog that looks at attitudes towards the ways in which language is use

### **Task 5 – English and Media Centre research**

Log in to the English and Media Centre online magazine.

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/e-magazine/emag-login/>

Username: cardinallangley      Password: Cardinal24

Select the archive and filter the options to include 'Language Topics'.

For each of the topics below, you should read and make notes on at least three articles (per topic).

Gender

Power

Technology

Representations and meanings

Varieties of English

Language Change

Child Language Acquisition

### **Task 6 – Research – The British Library**

Use the website to explore and make learning notes linked to the following ideas:

#### **Changing Voices Over Time**

<https://www.bl.uk/british-accent-and-dialects/search?q=Changing+voices%3A+English+over+time>

#### **Social Variation**

[http://explore.bl.uk/primo\\_library/libweb/action/dlSearch.do?vid=BLVU1&institution=BL&search\\_scope=LSCOP-WEBSITE&query=any,contains,social+variation&tab=website\\_tab](http://explore.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/dlSearch.do?vid=BLVU1&institution=BL&search_scope=LSCOP-WEBSITE&query=any,contains,social+variation&tab=website_tab)

### **Task 7 – 'The Secret Life of a 4 Year Old'**

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-secret-life-of-4-and-5-year-olds>

Watch one of the episodes and consider what we learn about how children develop.

### **Task 8 – ‘The Lady of Letters’ – Alan Bennett**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=lady+of+letters&view=detail&mid=B5FAA0A13C3E25D7B607B5FAA0A13C3E25D7B607&FORM=VIRE>

Watch the dramatic monologue in full and write down the 10 conventions you believe a monologue should have if you were to write your own.

### **Task 9 – Example Analysis tasks**

Below, there are three example analytical tasks. You should work through each of them and research the key topics to help you construct an argument.

In your responses, you should try to:

- apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent expression (this must be precise)
- demonstrate understanding of relevant language concepts and issues (which you will likely need to research before you begin your essay)
- consider contextual factors and language features associated with the construction of meaning provide supporting examples.

**Essays are on the next page**

## Essay 1

Read the following extract from an article entitled “England’s Regional Accents: Geordie’s still alreet” from *The Economist* magazine:

A FIERCE pride in one's regional roots can be found throughout England. Increased mobility and the ubiquitousness of television and radio have done surprisingly little to homogenise the distinctive accents and dialects that characterise the different parts of the country. Some are spreading; some retreating. Some are mutating; some are even getting stronger. But, overall, the pronunciation and prosody of spoken English seems to vary as much as ever across the country of its birth.

Liverpool's “Scouse” dialect has long fascinated linguists, with its throaty, guttural utterances that emerged from a mixture of Irish, Scots, Welsh and Lancashire accents in the late 19th century. For example, Liverpoolians tend to add a breathy “h” sound to words that end with a “t”, lending their distinctive intonation to “what”, “that” and “but”. According to Kevin Watson, who lectures in “sociophonetics” at the University of Lancaster, this is not lax articulation but rather a conscious effort to soften the uttered word through what he calls “plosive lenition”. Older Liverpoolians limit their use of it to words of a single syllable but younger ones have increased the individuality of the Scouse accent by extending it to “chocolate”, “certificate” and “aggregate”, he says.

From: *The Economist*, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. Available at:

<http://www.economist.com/node/18775029>

**Using the extract as a starting point, analyse and evaluate the attitudes speakers have towards non-standard varieties of English.**

## Essay 2

Read the following text, which was a poster displayed in an examination room in a school:



AQA	City & Guilds	CCEA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC
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### Warning to Candidates

1. You **must** be on time for all your examinations.
2. You **must not** become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of the examination.
3. You **must not**:
  - sit an examination in the name of another candidate;
  - have in your possession any unauthorised material or equipment which might give you an unfair advantage.
4. **Possession of a mobile phone** or other unauthorised material **is breaking the rules**, even if you do not intend to use it, and you will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification.
5. You **must not** talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once you have entered the examination room.
6. You **must** follow the instructions of the invigilator.
7. If you are in any doubt speak to the invigilator.

The *Warning to Candidates* must be displayed in a prominent place outside each examination room. This may be a hard copy A3 paper version or an image of the poster projected onto a wall or screen for all candidates to see.

Using this extract as a starting point, analyse and evaluate the ways in which text producers can exercise power in writing.

### Essay 3

In the extract below, a mother is at home playing with her child, who is aged 1 year and 7 months.

**Child:** oh  
**Mother:** you stay here (0.5) daddy's going to do some work (1.0) no you come in here  
(.) daddy's going to do some work (.) you're not going upstairs (.) you get in the way  
**Child:** oh  
**Mother:** you go and play (.)  
**Child:** oh  
**Mother:** come on (.) get away from there (.) we've got clean washing  
*Child walks away from washing*  
**Mother:** yes  
**Child:** oh mamma (.) mamma (.) mum (.) here (.) there (.)  
**Mother:** have you pulled the leg off your dolly again (0.5) oh (.) stay here (.) daddy's  
working  
**Child:** oh (1.0) dolly  
**Mother:** isn't it dark  
**Child:** oh hello  
**Father:** hello (0.5) is she going out  
**Mother:** Eileen  
**Child:** a lorry (.) away (.) a lorry (.) a lorry

From: TalkBank <http://childes.talkbank.org/browser/index.php?url=Eng-UK/Howe/eileen1.cha>

**Using this extract as a starting point, analyse and evaluate the role of caregiver speech in the language development of a child in the first 2 years of their life.**

### **Task 10 – Open Learning Courses**

You should engage in Open Learning courses and receive the certificates of participation. Though the learning process, you should comprehensively engage with the tasks and produce learning notes. You should make selections to engage in at least 50 hours of study before study commences in September.

[English grammar in context](#)

[Grammar matters](#)

[Exploring the English Language](#)

[English in the world today](#)

[Essay and report writing skills](#)

[Exploring Books for Children](#)

[Childhood in the digital age](#)

[How to be a critical reader](#)

[Children’s perspectives on play](#)

[A brief history of communication: from hieroglyphics to emojis](#)

[Creative writing and critical reading](#)

[Language in the real world](#)

[Language and thought: an introduction to representation](#)

### **Task 11 – Writing Creatively**

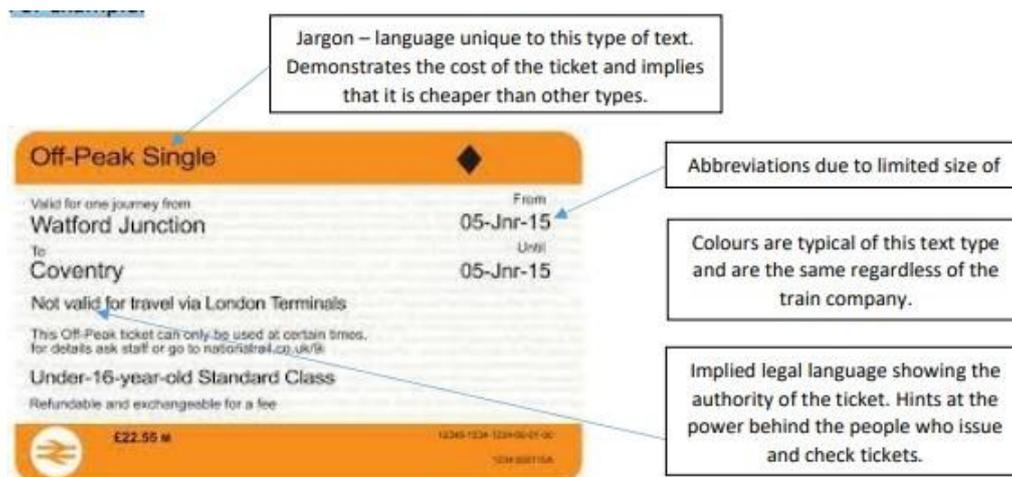
Write a piece of creative writing in any genre you like (story, article, monologue, poem) with a word count of 750 – 1000 words. The topic is free choice.

## Task 12 – Language Scrapbook

The joy about studying English Language is that it is everywhere.

As part of your summer work, start a 'scrapbook' where you collect different examples of language. Annotate the examples looking at how they use language to meet the demands of the different audiences, forms and functions of the text.

For example:



The expectation will be that you bring these scrapbooks to your first lesson back in September and it should be a book that you can add to throughout the two years you are studying English Language.

I would recommend buying a book like this:

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Artway-Enviro-Sketchbook-Cartridge-Hardboard/dp/B00IG6C8WS/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?dchild=1&keywords=scrapbook+white+pages&qid=1585519293&sr=8-5](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Artway-Enviro-Sketchbook-Cartridge-Hardboard/dp/B00IG6C8WS/ref=sr_1_5?dchild=1&keywords=scrapbook+white+pages&qid=1585519293&sr=8-5)

To prepare for starting in September, we would recommend that you bought:

- Lever arch folder
- Dividers
- Punched Pockets
- Highlighters
- Scrapbook

You will also be asked to buy an English Language textbook to support you with your revision and studies.

**We hope that you enjoy working through these tasks and gaining an insight into A-Level study.**

**This programme is very different to GCSE study and requires dedication from you to your research and personal study. However, you will find it interesting and rewarding – so we'll look forward to seeing you in September.**