

A Level English Language and Literature: The Language of Poetry and Plays
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- AO1** - Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.
- AO2** - Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.
- AO3** - Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which texts are produced and received.
- AO4** - Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic and literary concepts and methods

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Learners will need to know:
Section A – Poetry: William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

- **Historical context:** Industrialisation, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, the French Revolution, the American War of Independence, the life and work of William Blake, the role of the Church as an institution in 18th century England, poverty in 18th century England
- **Aspects of poetic form:** the use of poetic voice, rhyme, meter, pattern
- **Literary and linguistic devices:** figurative language, word-classes, phonology and lexis
- **The concept of literary theory**
- **Themes in Blake's poetry:** childhood, the natural world, power and control, poverty, religion etc.

Section B – Play: Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- **Historical context:** the Victorian Era, the life of Oscar Wilde, the morality and belief system of the aristocratic Victorians, Dandyism, the Aesthetic movement, homosexuality in Victorian England, and 'the founding child'
- **Aspects of the play form:** stage directions, dialogue, costumes, setting, the use of props etc.
- **Conventions of genre:** comedy, comedy of manners, farce, satire
- **Literary and linguistic devices:** figurative language, word-classes, phonology and lexis
- **The concept of literary theory and criticism**

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In Section A of this component, students will continue to engage with Blake's collection of poems *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, which they have studied in Year 12. However, at A level, learners now respond to a thematic question and explore how Blake portrays ideas about religion, childhood, creation, poverty and the natural world. Learners continue to develop their repertoire of linguistic and literary devices from KS4 and AS level and practise how to employ these judiciously to analyse meaning. Section B introduces learners to Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, a satirical play which humorously mocks the attitudes and beliefs of the upper-class Victorian elites. This is the first time at KS5 that students grapple with the play as an artistic form; with that said, students build on their knowledge of the play form from KS4, where they studied R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End* and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Learners continue to develop their understanding of the social, historical and cultural context which informed Blake's work and evaluate his poetry within the context of the Romantic literary period. Similarly, *The Importance of Being Earnest* challenges learners to explore an entirely different historical context and literary period, the Aesthetic Movement of the late 19th century. Students will have some prior knowledge of the Victorian Era from their study of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* at KS4, and perhaps even *Oliver Twist* at KS3. Understanding both of these historical periods and literary movements will be vital to illuminating students' understanding of English literature more broadly, and will benefit them immensely at the undergraduate level.

In their study of both Blake and Wilde, learners are taught how to read and understand literary criticism and learn how to apply this to their own interpretations, introducing them to an important skill needed for undergraduate study. Students' engagement with literary criticism is also complemented by their research for Component 4, where they must independently read a variety of texts, including literary criticism. Students are

encouraged to integrate theory and concepts into their own analysis, a necessary skill for any undergraduate student of English literature.

Learners are encouraged to draw comparisons between Blake's London and the city we live in today and to read a wide range of poetry from across different literary periods both to inform their understanding of Blake's work and to develop their cultural capital. Like Blake, the themes and ideas explored by Wilde continue to remain relevant, and his work is very much *alive* in our world today (in the most literal sense, plays like *Earnest* remain tremendously popular on the London stage). Each of these writers has left an indelible mark on the English literary tradition, and an exploration of their work can be an experience both mind-expanding and soul-enriching.