

**St Joseph's College**  
**English Department**

**Curriculum Intent Statement:**

We all have a story to tell, but in order to make people listen to our story, we have to tell it in a compelling and persuasive way. Often it feels as though the society we live in wants to decide our story for us. Having the power to make people listen to the story **you** want to tell depends on **how** well you tell it. **Language** gives us the power to control our own narrative.

That is why studying **English Language** is so important and why studying the best told stories in **English Literature** is essential.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* – two texts currently being studied by our A Level students - we see how different societies try to write people's stories for them in the way the writers present such themes as the exploitation of women and the harmful stereotyping of black people. Through the use of **satire and irony** in Atwood's narrative and Shakespeare's use of **drama and poetry**, we see how the English language can be used to force society to listen to every single person's story, regardless of gender, background, class or nationality.

That is why in your English studies, we begin in year 7 with the ancient Greeks, who believed that **drama and poetry** were the best forms to explore the complexities of the human identity, and Geoffrey Chaucer who, through his use of such devices as **satire** as far back as the Middle Ages, formed the basis for literature as we know it.

Through your studies you will be taken on a journey to explore how for centuries writers have endeavoured to make sense of, explore and question the wonderful complexities of the human psyche through the power of our always-changing, multi-cultural and ever-diversifying English Language. By the time you finish year 7, you will have explored how such ideas as power, identity, corruption and morality are woven across the ages from Shakespeare, to the Victorian era, and finally to the modern day where the stories of the Windrush generation are crucial to understanding how a person's narrative can be controlled by a corrupt system in our own time.

In years 8 and 9, you will continue to explore the efforts of wonderful writers and speakers to tell human stories as they should be told in the Enlightenment, Romantic, Gothic and Modern eras to chart the impact that social, political and industrial changes have on shaping human thought and the individual. In year 9, just in time for GCSE, you will explore the genre of dystopian fiction, in which the consequences of allowing society to dictate our individual narratives are laid bare in nightmarish, totalitarian worlds of the future where people are almost completely controlled and their stories totally dictated by oppressive societies. You will also apply your critical analysis skills to writing poetry of protest, exploring how such forms have begun to help to shift the narrative, with writers insisting they will no longer be ignored. You will also be able to discuss the literary canon, considering the significance of contexts on unheard voices, and be able to apply literary theory to help your critical thoughts and analysis of how those who have power have been able to set the agenda.

Narrative and power lead us through GCSE: considering how writers have critiqued the problems caused by unequal power distribution across time, from economic power in *A Christmas Carol*, to abuse of positions afforded by entrenched social class and gender in *Lord of the Flies*, through poetry of power and conflict, to the tyranny of ambition in *Macbeth*. Alongside this we apply similar questions to extracts from a diverse range of voices that explore similar themes.

At A level we expand our discussions of narrative even further, considering how unreliable narrators in *Wuthering Heights*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Great Gatsby* require the reader to question whether reading is itself actually an act of intervention and construction of narrative. We also consider 'telling tales' about place and identity, and in Language and Literature consider the significance of modality and language use in shaping narratives, as well as our own powers of transformative writing.

Understanding the richness of literary contexts throughout the ages and exploring how writers and speakers have developed newer and more diverse ways of expressing their narratives will not only prepare you for the challenges of the texts you will face at GCSE and potentially A Level, but during each module, you will practise the skills needed to develop your own exciting, unique voice in a range of written and spoken forms, so that when you come to **tell your story, or to speak on behalf of the disempowered**, everyone will be compelled to listen.

### **Our mission:**

The English department at St Joseph's College aims to develop great thinking English students who use the English language to interpret themselves and the whole of society with world-changing insight.

As well as every major literary movement, the works of Shakespeare are studied in each year of Key Stage 3 as his scrutiny of: human relationships and weaknesses; the ways in which prejudice in its many forms can erode a society and the power of language to manipulate and inspire, delude and delight, degrade and enlighten is always relevant to young people trying to navigate their way through an unstable and insecure modern world.

Key Stage 3 therefore establishes firmly the foundations of knowledge and analysis required for success at GCSE level: where the study of *Lord of the Flies* will draw upon their knowledge of the dystopian genre from year 9 as well as Shakespearean themes of power and ambition encountered as early as year 7 and where the study of poetry throughout the ages will enable students to revisit their knowledge of such traditions as romantic and classical poetry from years 8 and 9. In addition, their experience will be enhanced by the ways in which the English Department, in conjunction with other departments, encourage students at each stage to make productive links between academic units across subjects: their study of the innate evil in humanity in the works of Golding and Shakespeare at GCSE will echo their year 8 studies of the Gothic era as well as the theories of Darwin studied in their Science lessons during the same year.

At all stages and in all units, the constant reinforcing and retrieval of key language skills is essential, whether studying literary or non-literary fiction and non-fiction. Each unit comes with a knowledge booklet which forms the basis for in-depth study, each one containing a range of literary and linguistic tasks which promote the sophisticated exploration of each genre. Key reading skills of inference, evaluation, comparison, synthesis and the analysis of language and structure are woven into all four units of each academic year and a range of imaginative writing tasks aim to hone the skill of writing engagingly and compellingly for a variety of purposes and audiences.

**From the beginning of their studies in year 7, students are provided with an essential skills toolkit which they will use throughout their studies in all key stages. This is designed to complement, enhance and embed the powerful knowledge and key skills which are specific to each unit in order to deepen each student's exploratory thought and provide them with the concepts required to**

**communicate their ideas effectively. It builds on the strong foundations established at key stages 1 and 2, utilising retrieval strategies as well as encouraging independent learning to ensure these are embedded in students' long term memory.**

**These will be continually taught and reinforced so that, by the end of the journey at GCSE or A Level, each student should be equipped with the skills and depth of thought required to be excellent readers and writers.**