



English Language: Literature

Overview

Welcome to senior year of IB English Literature with Mr. Benton! This is the second year of *Language A: Literature*'s two-year course of study. While our goals are guided by the International Baccalaureate's regimen of assessments and exams, our class is primarily concerned with the personal growth and character development that results from literary consideration and analysis. I hope that through our work with literature drawn from a variety of perspectives, cultures, and eras, I can help this senior class become even more curious, imaginative, and empathetic global citizens.

The aims of this course are to enable students to ...

- develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, presenting, and performing;
- develop skills in interpretation, analysis and evaluation;
- develop sensitivity to the formal and aesthetic qualities of texts and an appreciation of how they contribute to diverse responses and open up multiple meanings;
- develop an understanding of relationships between texts and a variety of perspectives, cultural contexts, and local and global issues, and an appreciation of how they contribute to diverse responses and open up multiple meanings;
- develop an understanding of the relationships between studies in language and literature and other disciplines;
- communicate and collaborate in a confident and creative way; and
- foster a lifelong interest in and enjoyment of language and literature.

Students will focus exclusively on literary texts, adopting a variety of approaches to textual criticism. Students explore the nature of literature, the aesthetic function of literary language and textuality, and the relationship between literature and the world.

Studies in language and literature courses offer various opportunities for students to examine the ways in which their personal world and personal identities and relationships are represented in texts and how these relate to their own perspectives of the reality around them. Such studies also enable students to experience representations of other realities and other people, allowing them to get acquainted with perspectives of the world that might be different from their own. In this way, studies in language and literature courses provide students with an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the interaction between the local and the global and to cultivate intercultural critical thinking and consciousness.

Curriculum

This is an IB course with internationally defined standards and is designed to prepare students for the assessments they will take at the end of the Diploma Programme, earning them both college credit as well as meeting high school graduation requirements. As such, materials and discussions for this course may reflect topics not typically included in PCSB courses. All studies in language and literature courses will provide the opportunity to engage with a broad range of texts, approaches, ideas, stimuli and interpretations that address topics of personal, local, and global significance.

Semester 1: *an exploration of global issues*

- August Wilson's play Fences
- Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons's graphic novel Watchmen
- selected works from poet Wisława Szymborska
- Franz Kafka's novella Metamorphosis

Semester 2: *preparation for the IB exam in May*

- Toni Morrison's novel Beloved
- Kazuo Ishiguro's novel Klara and the Sun
- Henrik Ibsen's play Hedda Gabler*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby*
- William Shakespeare's play The Tempest*
- Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*

With the exception of the asterisked items (which are *potential* literary works for the spring semester and may or may not be assigned/studied depending on time limitations and the curricular needs of the class as a whole), I recommend that you purchase these texts — if possible — to allow for effective annotation; otherwise, significant Post-it notes can be used in a lender copy.

These works may challenge learners intellectually, personally and culturally, and involve sensitive and mature topics. A course that successfully challenges its students to think critically may explicitly address sensitive topics through texts and class discussions while inviting students to critically reflect on various perspectives offered. Engaging with sensitive topics in these courses — whether receptively or productively — must be done with every reasonable effort to encourage students to respond with respect for their peers and larger learning communities. Providing a safe environment in which discussion may be facilitated is an important role of the teacher. In general, approaching sensitive topics in the study of literature must be done through an intellectually critical lens avoiding gratuitous excess and/or superficial treatment and bearing in mind the IB's commitment to international-mindedness and intercultural respect.

Below, you will find a list of the possibly sensitive material in each of the major works that may be assigned in this course:

Fences: contains racial slurs and strong language reflecting societal tensions; complex family relations may be sensitive to some readers

Watchmen: features graphic fight scenes, sexual activity, nudity, and strong language

Wisława Szymborska's poetry: engages with existential and reflective themes, including war and death

Metamorphosis: the unsettling transformation of the main character may provoke discomfort

Beloved: graphic violence related to slavery and descriptions of sexual relationships and assault

Klara and the Sun: delves into artificial intelligence and consciousness, raising unsettling questions about what it means to be human

Hedda Gabler: themes of dissatisfaction and suicide are central to the play, potentially raising ethical and moral questions

The Great Gatsby: themes of moral ambiguity along with depictions of excessive alcohol consumption may challenge traditional values

The Tempest: themes of colonization and authority in the play may provoke critical discussions about historical and ethical considerations

Persepolis 2: graphic violence related to political unrest, some non-explicit sexual situations

All materials are available for parent review upon request. If a parent or student is uncomfortable with the reading or discussion of a certain text, options that should be coordinated with the teacher include: skipping the section of the text that deals with the sensitive topic; reading a teacher-authorized summary of that section of the text; or reading an alternate text altogether (one text specially selected by the teacher) and conducting an independent study of that text while the class works with the regularly assigned literary work.

Class Policies

Expectations

Please bring completed assignments and all of the necessary materials to every class meeting. You'll also want to be mentally prepared; this means you're demonstrating knowledge of the text we're studying, contributing to class activities, actively listening to others, and taking intellectual risks on the daily.

Always treat all members of the class with respect: listen fully to opinions that conflict with your own and do what you can to look out for each other. It's my aim to always show you respect as well. Please communicate honestly with me about your needs, both physical/emotional and academic. For example, do we need to review a tricky concept? Do you have too many assignments scheduled on one day? Do we need to adjust our pace? Maybe we should have class outside today? I'll do my best to help.

Approach

Teaching in this course is driven by critical concepts and fueled by inquiry. The study of literature is rooted in both local and global contexts, and classroom activities are focused on effective teamwork and collaboration. Instruction is informed by diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment while also allowing for adaptations to meet the needs of all learners. See also "Grades & Measurement".

Absences

In the case of a student's absence, it is your (the student's) responsibility to obtain any and all materials and information delivered in class during the period of the absence; all class materials will be available on the course's class website (bentonenglish.com) and Canvas/ManageBac. Due to the nature of the block schedule, please do not wait until the next day class meets to make contact. In the case of a missed assessment, I generally expect you to make up the assignment the day you return. You must take the initiative to arrange a make-up quiz or assignment. If the work is not made up when scheduled or is not rescheduled after 36 hours, a zero will be given for the missed assignment.

Late Work

Assignments that are turned in one school day late will receive a 50%-off penalty; work that is turned in over one school day late will not receive a grade. The exceptions to this rule are some long-term assignments for which 10–40% (with the percentage steadily increasing throughout the year) will be deducted for each late day. In the case of extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness, personal problems), please contact me so I can determine the best course of action: keep me in the loop by proactively communicating so that I can be flexible to your needs. I'm a creature of mercy and am ready to extend grace at a moment's notice.

If a student is absent, the arrangements for make-up work are the student's responsibility. In-class make-up work may be scheduled at the teacher's convenience during or after school. Students will normally have the number of days absent to make up work except in extenuating circumstances. When in doubt, come see me.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to complete all assignments without the assistance of others unless I explicitly provide written permission for collaboration on a specific assignment. Your writing about texts should involve your own independent insight and thoughts. Sharing work with another student; discussing assessment questions; using another person's work for reference; including un-cited evidence; making use un-cited of analyses, claims, evidence, or commentary from generative AI; or using any other human's or AI's words or concepts without accurately citing the source will result in a grade of 0% on the assignment and a referral to administration for cheating.

Students who have questions regarding whether or not something constitutes plagiarism have a responsibility to consult with the teacher prior to submitting the work/assignment. Violations of the Honor Code will also result in disciplinary or academic probation and ultimately may cause a student to be removed from the program.

Students should report to tutoring instead of resorting to academic dishonesty. Per SPHS International Baccalaureate English Department policy, each teacher reserves the right to challenge the authenticity of any student-generated writing. Inconsistencies in style, voice, comprehension, and structure will require investigation to determine whether or not plagiarism occurred.

Submitting Assignments

All handwritten work must be written, double-spaced, in black or blue ink (not in pencil). Please use only the front side of the page, and respect the margins (as we'll review in class). Instructions will be given in class how to scan handwritten work into a PDF for submission when necessary. Typed work should be in full MLA format unless otherwise directed, and I'll provide an MLA template on my site for students to use. More instruction will be given in about different methods of submitting unique assignments.

Necessary Supplies

- plenty of college-ruled notebook paper
- a college-ruled composition book
- several blue or black pens (not pencils)
- 8 colors of highlighters
- a green, red, and purple pen
- the currently assigned reading*
- sticky notes
- an academic planner (physical or digital)
- an organized way of reliably storing handouts, notes, colormarking, etc.

* see the Curriculum section

Wish List

There are some supplies that are useful for the teacher, classroom, and students that are not supplied by the school. Some of these needs are:

- refill ink cartridges for my Epson ET-2803 classroom printer (i.e. EcoTank 522)
- liquid hand sanitizer for hands
- sanitizing wipes for desk surfaces
- snacks for students (e.g. granola bars)

IB Assessments

IB exams will start in May of 2024. You are required to sit for these exams, and for all IB assessments, as they are scheduled. There will be fees assessed for not doing so. The IB exam will count as your end-of-course exam. A breakdown of the assessment weighting is as follows:

Higher Level	
External Component (80%)	
Paper 1: Guided literary analysis (2 hour 15 minutes) The paper consists of two literary passages, from two different literary forms, each accompanied by a question. Students write an analysis of each of the passages. (40 marks)	35%
Paper 2: Comparative essay (1 hour 45 minutes) The paper consists of four general questions. In response to one question, students write a comparative essay based on two works studied in the course. (30 marks)	25%
Higher level (HL) essay Students submit an essay on one literary text or work studied during the course. (20 marks) The essay must be 1,200–1,500 words in length.	20%
Internal Component (20%)	
This component consists of an individual oral that is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course.	
Individual oral (15 minutes) Supported by an extract from one work written originally in the language studied and one from a work studied in translation, students will offer a prepared response of 10 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of questions by the teacher, to the following prompt: <i>Examine the ways in which the global issue of your choice is presented through the content and form of two of the works that you have studied. (40 marks)</i>	20%

Standard Level	
External Component (70%)	
Paper 1: Guided literary analysis (1 hour 15 minutes) The paper consists of two passages from two different literary forms, each accompanied by a question. Students choose one passage and write an analysis of it. (20 marks)	35%
Paper 2: Comparative essay (1 hour 45 minutes) The paper consists of four general questions. In response to one question, students write a comparative essay based on two works studied in the course. (30 marks)	35%
Internal Component (30%)	
This component consists of an individual oral that is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course.	
Individual oral (15 minutes) Supported by an extract from one work written originally in the language studied and one from a work studied in translation, students will offer a prepared response of 10 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of questions by the teacher, to the following prompt: <i>Examine the ways in which the global issue of your choice is presented through the content and form of two of the works that you have studied. (40 marks)</i>	30%

Grades & Measurement

I've designed this course to reward effort, planning, and growth. For the most part, English is a skill-based course, so many assignments are scored not on mastery of content knowledge but on mastery of specific skills with the English language. As my student, I expect you to show thorough knowledge of text(s), to demonstrate critical thinking, to be a thoughtful listener; to express yourself clearly through written work and oral response; and to remain open to ideas that conflict with your own.

Notably, this course does not use a weighted gradebook, so all graded elements combine in the same “total points” pool. While the exact number and distribution of various tasks will vary from one grading period to the next, most graded work falls into the following four categories:

- **Classwork** includes in-class tasks such as lecture notes, bellwork, activities for skill development/practice, active participation in discussion, written reflections, individual or group presentations. These elements will often be listed with a green arrow on the class schedule but may also come up spontaneously as needed. Collected classwork will be due about every two weeks, listed on the schedule board as Focused Notes. Collaboration is encouraged and allowed for all classwork unless I specify otherwise.
- **Homework** encompasses any work that’s meant to be completed (mostly) at home. Most homework, like journals, should be approached over multiple days, not all at once; leaving analytical writing to the last minute puts students in a tough spot. Unlike classwork, collaboration is usually not permitted with homework; these tasks are designed to be completed independently ... with support: always take time during class and Diploma Support to seek my help as needed.
- **Content Quizzes** are any in-class assessment, usually consisting of short response and/or multiple choice questions, that’s designed to gauge your familiarity with a specific section of an assigned reading or a particular body of content knowledge.
- **Skill Assessments** are an assessment of skill (not merely content knowledge) aligned to a particular standard or multiple standards; one example of a such a test in this class would be an in-class critical essay or commentary on a specific text (assessed according to an IB rubric).

Good Communication

Regularly visit the course’s Canvas/ManageBac page and the class website (bentonenglish.com) for the weekly class agenda, handouts, and assignments, digital audio and text versions of assigned reading, and other useful info and links. All general class announcements will run through Remind, which also offers convenient two-way communication for simple informational questions. If you’d prefer to email me (at bentonro@pcsb.org), please provide your name and period/block in the message so it’s easier to quickly identify you and better address your specific needs.

This class is a group effort: it is yours as much as it is mine (probably even more). It will only be as good as you make it, so I expect and require you to chip in. If you spot any inconsistencies, if you have any ideas about how to improve or streamline our processes, if you have any issues or suggestions at all, please do not hesitate to let me know. Remember that I am here for you. I want to help you wherever I can. That said, we have a good deal of work ahead of us. But that doesn’t mean we can’t enjoy ourselves while we do it.

Student Name: _____

Class Name: _____ Class Period/Block: _____

After fully reading the syllabus, please sign, complete, detach, and return only this page by the due date or – if you’re entering the course later in the year – three school days after receiving this syllabus packet. Please keep the rest of the syllabus in your English folder until the end of the school year.

Syllabus Agreement

By signing below, I agree that I have read, understand, fully submit to, personally agree with, and shall willfully comply with all of the policies, rules, requirements, expectations, and consequences covered throughout this syllabus for Mr. Benton’s IB English Literature course:

Student’s Signature: _____

Parent’s Signature: _____

Teacher’s Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Info (please fill in all that apply)

name: _____

relationship to student: _____

phone: (____) - ____ - ____

email: _____

name: _____

relationship to student: _____

phone: (____) - ____ - ____

email: _____

(If more space is needed for more family contacts, please attach additional sheets.)

Student Info

your phone: () - -

your email: _____

When are your Diploma Support blocks?

What are your (current) plans after graduation?

When it comes to your past study of the English language, what are THREE specific weaknesses or areas of frustrations that come to your mind?

When it comes to your past study of the English language, what are TWO specific areas that you consider to be either a personal strength, a source of enjoyment, or an area of curiosity?

Aside from a good grade, what is ONE thing you hope to get out of this class?

What is your biggest motivation to do well in this final year of high school?

Can you think of something that you'd like me to know or learn about you? Please share something that will help me be a better teacher for you.