

Selecting a “work of literary merit” for your English EE:

The Language and Literature Extended essay guide makes it clear that student’s “chosen text(s) should be of sufficient literary merit to sustain an in-depth analysis.”

Here are some options for making sure your chosen text meets this requirement:

- Select an author from the IB’s Prescribed Reading List: ibpublishing.ibo.org/prl/
- Select work that has been featured on awards long list or has won an award
 - <https://www.nationalbook.org/national-book-awards/years/>
 - <https://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-year>
 - <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/lists/all-nobel-prizes-in-literature/>
- If you hope to study the song lyrics of a music artist, remember that you will do so through the lens of poetry. The lyrics of the album(s) you select must be written by the artist themselves.
 - Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan and Kendrick Lamar are all featured on the IB’s Prescribed Reading List. These artists’ lyrics are complex and lend themselves to poetic analysis. Your selected songwriter should demonstrate a similar attention detail that Lamar, Mitchell and Dylan offer.
 - Check in with an English teacher before committing yourself to analyzing a songwriter’s work.
- If you have a work you’d like to study that is not recognized as an award winner, or included on IB’s list, you will need to meet with an English teacher to discuss this and get your text approved.
 - Scussel availability: any downtime in class, after school Monday through Friday. (Please do not email as this is best accomplished through discussion.)
 - Benton availability: C6-7, A1-2, B6-7
 - Drof availability: B1-2, B3-4 (please email me at drofm@pcsb.org to let me know when you plan to stop by), after school Monday through Friday.

Some extra considerations:

- Your selected work must have been originally written in English if you intend to address just one text. If you want to explore a translated text, you must compare it to a work originally written in English (see English Criteria guide for a description of Category 2).
- You may not use a work previously studied in a SPHS English class. You may, however, study a work by an author you have studied during your time at SPHS. For example, you cannot write your EE on *The Things They Carried*, but you are welcome to write about O’Brien’s novel *Going After Cacciato*.

As you narrow toward a topic of study, be aware that most of your research involves reading, annotating, and analyzing your chosen work. Secondary sources are sometimes acceptable but should not be the focus of your study. IB wants to see evidence of your independent ideas about your chosen text. See the excerpts from the guide regarding this below:

Since the majority of the EE rubric score is based on your Critical Thinking, it’s important to pursue a question that gives you an opportunity to show off your ability to authentically analyze literature. For best results, focus on authorial choices and thematic meaning.

Use of literary criticism

Students should aim for a compromise between building on the wisdom of experienced critics and introducing new personal elements. An essay that simply repeats the views of established literary critics will not receive a high mark.

Use of literary biography

Essays that interpret literary works in terms of the writer’s life tend to produce reductive readings based on second-hand information. Such essays receive low marks and the IB therefore advises students to avoid biographical topics.