Frequently asked questions – Revising English

1. When will the exams take place?

* Summer 2020

2. How long will the exams be?

GCSE language

* Paper 1: 1 hour 45 minutes
* Paper 2: 1 hour 45 minutes

GCSE literature

* Paper 1: 1 hour 45 minutes
* Paper 2: 2 hours 15 minutes

3. What will the exams look like?

GCSE language

* Paper 1

Section A: reading. Students will read an extract from a 20th Century novel and answer four questions on the text. The questions will cover a range of skills: information retrieval, analysis of language and structure and a student’s ability to critically evaluate.

Section B: writing. Students will be asked to produce either a piece of narrative or descriptive writing. They will have two choices and they select their preferred option. The descriptive writing task will have a picture stimulus and the narrative writing task will have a title, scenery or opening sentence.

* Paper 2

Section A: reading. Students will have to read two non-fiction texts (one will be modern and one will be a 19th century text) and answer 4 questions on them. The questions will cover a range of skills: true or false, summary writing, language analysis and comparing ideas.

Section B: writing. Students will be asked to produce a piece of transactional writing. This can take the form of: letters (formal and informal), reports, articles, leaflets, speeches or an essay.

GCSE literature

* Paper 1

Section A: Shakespearean text (Romeo and Juliet or Macbeth)

Section B: A Victorian novel (Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde or A Christmas Carol)

In both sections students will be given one question that focuses on either: characterisation, theme or context. They will be asked to explore how that is shown in the given extract from the text and then link it to their knowledge of the whole text.

* Paper 2: 2 hour 15 minutes (60% of GCSE)

Section A - Modern texts (An Inspector Calls). Students will be given one question that focuses on either: characterisation, theme or context. They will be asked to explore how that is shown in the given extract from the text and then link it to their knowledge of the whole text.

Section B: the poetry anthology. Students will be asked to answer one question comparing two poems. They will be given one named poem printed on the paper and have to compare it to one other poem from their chosen anthology cluster (they will not have the anthology in the exam).

Section C: Unseen poetry. Students will answer one question on one unseen poem and one question comparing this poem with a second unseen poem. The poems will be thematically linked.

4. When should students begin revising?

* Now! We recommend students continually recap and revise the set texts they have already studied. This will ensure they stay fresh in their memory and should stop them from feeling overwhelmed at the end of the course.
* We would expect the amount of revision to gradually increase as they get closer to the exams.

5. What are the best revision activities?

* Using exam papers alongside a revision guide and the internet. Papers should be marked either by talking to members of staff or using mark schemes at home.
* Ensure they know the set texts thoroughly including: characterisation, themes, context and quotes.
* Students should read as widely as possible. This will not only help them become more confident readers but it can also help to develop their vocabulary.