

English News

Issue 8

Welcome to the first AQA English newsletter of 2011 – now combining GCSE and A-Level English.

By including articles about GCSE and A-Level, we hope to make our newsletter even more useful. Colleagues teaching both levels will find a range of articles of interest. Those teaching just one level will hopefully enjoy finding out what their students might go on to, or where they have come from.

There is something of a Shakespeare theme to this issue:

- The enclosed teaching resource is an A-level English Literature resource, focusing on the dramatic context for LitB Unit 2
- Following the release of our Oddsocks Shakespeare DVD, Peter Thomas, our Principal Moderator for GCSE English Literature, writes about approaches to teaching Shakespeare in the new GCSE English specifications and beyond
- We also have an article about the Shakespeare Schools Festival, an exciting opportunity for students from years 7 to 13 to perform the works of Shakespeare in a professional theatre.

Most centres teaching a two-year GCSE course are now a term into the new GCSE specifications. Inside this issue, three teachers from different schools write

about their experience of controlled assessment. One writes about how her school has approached the Spoken Language Study, another about logistical and ICT security issues and the third about some of the issues that have arisen in her centre and how they are being addressed.

In talking to centres we understand that many subject leaders are still considering different routes through the GCSE specifications. With that in mind, we have an article by a Head of English who is integrating GCSE Media Studies into her English courses. She explains how the introduction of Media Studies is helping all her students achieve their potential.

‘Stretch and challenge’ is a new A-level requirement. Inside, we discuss how this is addressed in English Literature and English Language and how we are supporting teachers with their professional development in this area.

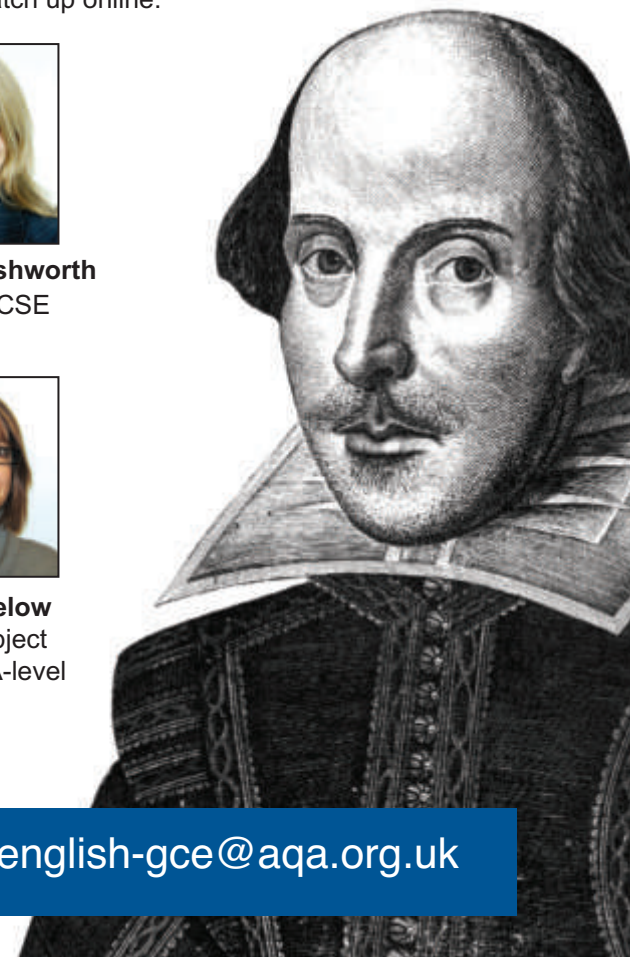
We really hope this new joint newsletter proves valuable. If you have any comments or suggestions for what you would like to see in future newsletters, please get in touch. What’s more, we’d love to hear if you or your students are doing something exciting that you think other teachers would like to know about. If you have missed any past editions of the newsletter, you can catch up online.



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Students bored of ‘the Bard’?

The Shakespeare Schools Festival (SSF) brings Shakespeare to life

English teachers are always looking for new ways to bring Shakespeare to life. It's always a great relief when a local theatre company puts on a production of the right play at the right time. Failing that, the Head might be persuaded to allow the timetable to be suspended long enough for a travelling band of players to perform in the over-stretched school hall. But why not help the students to put on their own production? Not just in the same over-stretched school hall, but in a professional theatre, with professional support.

Since 2000, the Shakespeare Schools Festival charity has provided 90 000 young people from 4428 schools with the logistical and financial support to perform their own adapted versions of Shakespeare's plays in 250 professional theatres.

Penelope Middleboe, Executive Director of SSF, explains that the festival provides teachers, with no previous directing experience, with the necessary toolkit to succeed with young people of all abilities:

‘We have proven tips for getting the young people up on their feet, inhabiting Shakespeare's characters and speaking his language in an enjoyable way,’ she says. ‘We believe that by spending time with the language in this way, they come to an organic understanding of the text – its themes and imagery.’



Getting started

The journey for each school begins in January or February when it registers and indicates its first and second choices of play and theatre. Later in the spring, each school receives notice of its autumn performance date, as well as the venue and the play they are to perform. Each performance features four schools performing four different 30-minute plays.

Schools then get access to the participants' area of the festival website with professionally abridged scripts, plot summaries, directors' notes and other useful materials.

In June, a teacher from each school is invited to a regional teacher training day run by the National Theatre. This is a full day dedicated to developing the skills needed for directing Shakespeare with young people. Teachers in Special Schools receive an invitation to an extra workshop which addresses how to use Shakespeare with students with additional needs.

Practising and performing

The teachers then have all the resources they need to go back to their schools and start casting and practising their play. The performances can include up to 30 students from years 7 to 13. There are also an additional five places for a production team, who can take on technical and marketing responsibilities.

Different schools take different approaches to deciding who's going to be in their production. In some cases a whole class is used; others choose to focus on a gifted and talented cohort or students with special needs; some hold open auditions.

In September, each school is invited to take part in a cast workshop in its designated theatre, alongside one of the other schools they will be performing with. The workshop, run by the National Youth Theatre, focuses on performance techniques and gives students the chance to watch another school's work so far and to give and get constructive feedback.

Finally, in October and November, the school returns to its theatre for the performance days. The actors and production crew take part in technical and dress rehearsals during the day and then perform the play in front of a ticket-buying audience in the evening.

A rewarding experience for all

Students and teachers who have taken part in the Shakespeare Schools festival find it an immensely rewarding experience and many return year after year. As well as giving the students invaluable experience, it raises the profile of Shakespeare and drama within the school. Andrew Cooley of St Alban's School, which doesn't have a drama curriculum at all, says their performance of *Othello* has created a ripple effect in his school:



'On the workshop day we got really friendly with the school doing *The Merchant of Venice*, and they came in to perform it for my year 11s and became friends. A couple of other English teachers were doing *Othello* with their year 9s so we performed for them.'

They have decided to take part in the festival again, he explains and this time lots of children in the school are keen to get involved.

Highbury Grove School also performed *Othello*. Year 9 student Carolyn, who played Desdemona, explains that being in the play has increased her understanding of Shakespeare: 'In English I am studying *Macbeth* and it's helped me a lot because now I understand the words a lot more than everyone else.'

For Year 11 student Riaz, who played Rodrigo, the performance was the highlight: 'The adrenaline you get on stage and the applause from everyone makes you feel like you have achieved something and that you've done something really good.'

Michael, also in year 11, played Cassio. He says the experience has changed his attitude to theatre: 'Before I thought theatre and stuff was a bit elitist and I wouldn't have thought it suited me but now I like theatre acting a lot, theatre acting is cool for me.'

Perhaps the final word should go to a teacher at Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee School where all the pupils have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties:

'We are so proud of our performance, but we are also thrilled and excited that the new skills the students have learnt and the confidence they have gained will last for much longer than one night – SSF has helped our young people to look into the future.'

**For more information, visit www.ssf.uk.com
e-mail: enquiries@ssf.uk.com or call 0207 922 7755.**



Controlled assessment: How's it going?

Three teachers from three different schools write about their experiences so far of controlled assessment

Cathi Allison, Head of English at Royal Russell School in Croydon, tells us how her department is organising the controlled assessments and how they are using *Richard III* in different ways.

As with many schools, our Senior Management Team wanted to know in advance when we intended to do controlled assessments. We explained that we would attempt one every half term so that we had 'slots' booked and weren't sidelined by the other subjects who have a different approach.

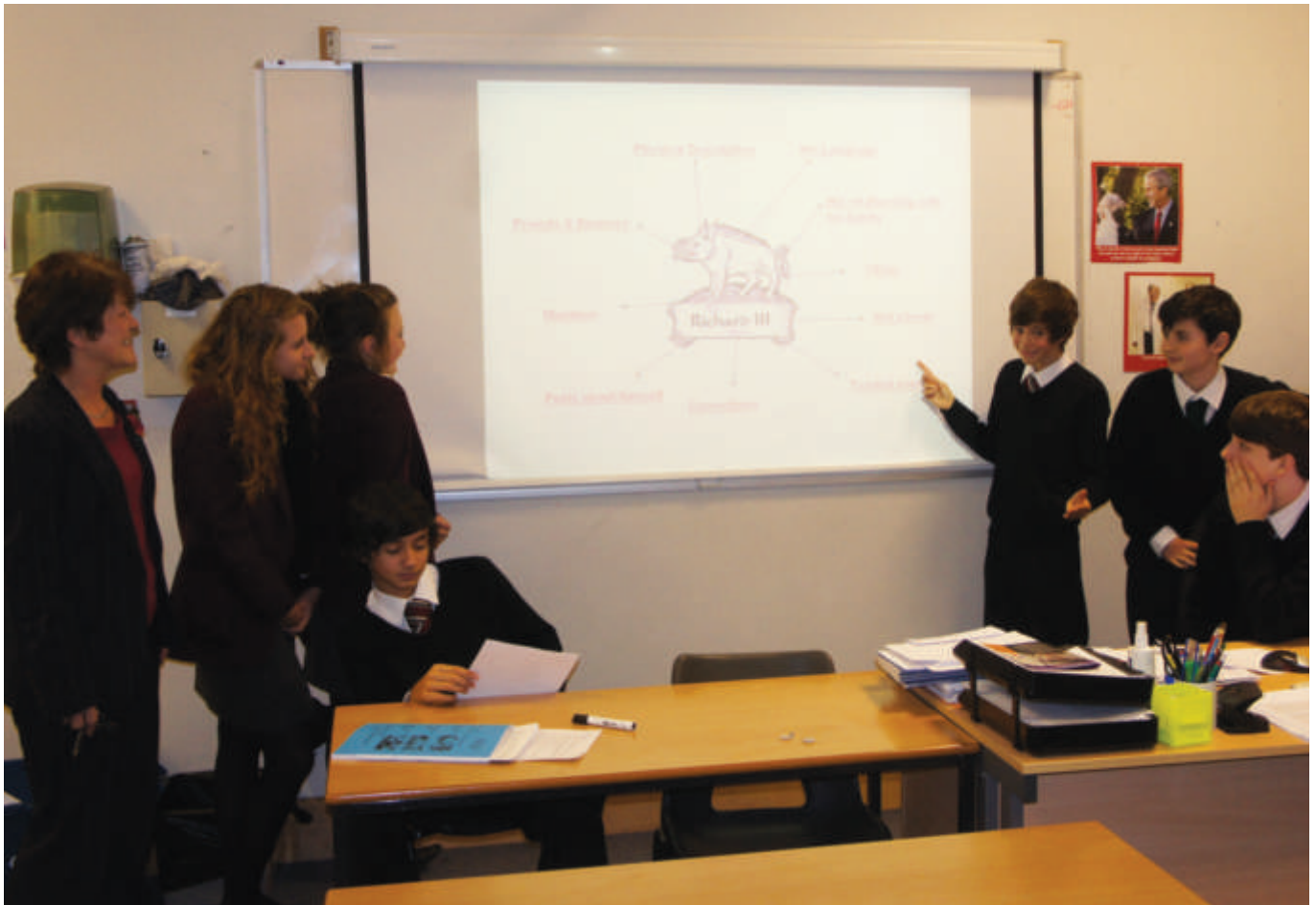
Our approach is to run assessments when students are ready and, as far as possible, do this in our computer rooms. Our boys perform much better on keyboards than they do in handwriting and this method also facilitates proof reading.

We aimed to complete 3b of the English Language assessment by the end of the first half term, with the possibility of stretching into the first week of the second half. We chose this as the least problematic assessment and we wanted to have it moderated as soon as possible to ascertain standards.

Each class booked a computer room when it was felt the group was sufficiently prepared. All four classes undertook the assessment separately over a 10 day period. Most of the students did not use notes, although some minimal ones were created for the 'film review'.

Using IT, securely

Students know we have spyware and IT support disabled spell check and the Internet for the duration of their assessment. There was no apparent panic; students worked effectively and comfortably and, just





before the end of the lesson, the Internet was reconnected and each student sent their completed work to their teacher's e-mail account. From there, we have stored it in our 'departmental coursework area' which is secure from students.

Each week, the department has a computer room booked in which students can sit their controlled assessment if they have missed it or can 'finish' one. As our double periods are only 1 hour 20 minutes long, there was still sufficient time for the slower ones to use this facility. For these students, teachers e-mailed back the unmarked work for students to readdress and, once more, these were e-mailed back to the teacher.

We keep the unmarked work in one section and teachers have the option to either 'mark online' using word and comment boxes and then store it electronically, or print it out, mark it and store it securely in a central location.

We were pleasantly surprised with the smoothness of this and also with the performance of the students who are obviously used to this form of assessment in different subjects. Although we have a long term plan over two years, each teaching group is preparing for a further assessment that suits teacher and students.

Doing Shakespeare

For my group, we have watched *Richard III*, looked at how the director had used Shakespeare to target a general audience and considered what genres were used. For the first assessment, students took the 'genre and audience' task and used their own choice of film. Although many, perhaps, did not focus as much on genre and audience as explicitly as I would have liked, they certainly ticked the other assessment objectives. From there, each student has chosen a favourite scene and rewritten it in modern English, looking for a contemporary context. As an En1 activity role play, they will be 'performing' their scene and will undertake the second part of 3b assessment 'Convert a situation from a Shakespeare play...'

As we are enjoying *Richard*, we will probably prepare for the Literature assessment 'Shakespeare and the English Literary Heritage' after half term. So far, so good!

Stephanie Wilson, an English teacher at Huntscliff School in Lincolnshire, writes about her experiences of the Spoken Language Study



'I h8 txt msgsl' John Humphrys' words may resonate with many teachers around the country, but students are likely to disagree violently with his opinion.

AQA recommends '*candidates should be encouraged to investigate topics that are of personal interest to them and collect their own data when possible*'. Given the ever-increasing use of technology and my own experience teaching AS/A2 English Language for a number of years, I set about designing a Scheme of Learning with the title: 'What devices do people use to maintain brevity when texting and how does this relate to the way we speak?'. The theory was that all teenagers text frequently and would, therefore, have many varieties of examples to collect as data.

Teaching techniques

The Assessment Objective A02 requires candidates to be able to '*understand variations in spoken language, explaining why language changes in relation to contexts*' and '*evaluate the impact of spoken language choices in own and others' use*'. Cue Lesson 1: 'Emotional Icons' – Emoticons ☺

Having given the class post-it notes, a variety of emoticons were placed around the classroom walls. An engaged and enthusiastic discussion followed, where we discovered two things: more girls than boys used emoticons and girls used a larger variety. Further discussion about gender differences, feelings and relationships followed. Immediately, we had briefly covered both elements of A02 and, as far as I am concerned, had fun whilst learning, with all students actively engaged and on task.

Next, we began looking at the contexts in which texts are produced, together with the relationships between sender and recipient. We analysed a variety of texts which pupils had sent to parents, grandparents and each other to identify and comment on the differences in language and devices used. Almost all students increased their use of Standard English and punctuation whilst using fewer abbreviations when texting parents and grandparents.

We also analysed texts sent between teachers (with permission from all concerned) and looked at content, context and relationships. Debate followed again – do we alter the way we speak depending on whom we are speaking to and our relationship with them?

Speech was also analysed in great detail – pupils took enormous delight in deliberately trying to use digression and divert me from the task in hand and then telling me I was no longer using Grice's Maxims!

The assessment

The main part that pupils were worried about was the actual controlled assessment. Those who had participated fully in every lesson, thought about topics discussed, completed all homework and research and actually revised in preparation, inevitably gave the best responses. Those who thought they'd wing it (slang and abbreviations!) realised they had to learn actively in each and every lesson, not just sit passively and rely on others to help them out.

Overall the topic was great to teach, even better to learn and produced some excellent answers. Now for the Shakespeare...

Sally Beswick, Key Stage 4 Coordinator for English at Parrs Wood School in Manchester, writes about the logistical challenges of controlled assessments



As it is our first time through the new specification, all teachers are teaching the same components of the specification at the same time, to enable us to share good practice.

Before the summer holidays, we completed the preparation work for the Moving Images controlled assessment (English Language 3b). We analysed the chase scene of 'Casino Royale' and all pupils sat the assessment at the same time, in classrooms with their own class teacher.

Rising to the challenge

The decision was made, for this first piece, to have all pupils handwrite their submissions and the whole process went relatively smoothly. Surprisingly, it was the higher ability pupils who seemed to panic most



about the controlled assessments. Once started, however, we found that most pupils, and in particular the top sets, responded well to the challenge and produced high quality work.

After the summer, we completed the second Creative Writing piece, choosing the 'Don't Get Me Started On...' commission piece. Once again, all classes completed the same scheme of work and sat the controlled assessment at the same time. This time, however, we found a higher proportion of pupils struggled to concentrate in timed conditions. We have, therefore, decided we will trial the use of ICT with some classes and see if this has an impact on pupil focus and consequently results.

To keep consistency between classes, we are going to use laptops in classrooms as opposed to ICT rooms. The laptops will have spell check and Internet disabled for the duration of the controlled assessment and, once completed, pupils will upload their responses to their class teacher via Moodle (VLE).

Catch-up

With over 300 pupils in the year group, we have had some logistical issues with absentees, but have liaised with other faculties to share ideas about how best to deal with this. Time will now be allocated, each half term, for pupils to catch up on any controlled assessments they have missed in any subject area.

Although we have found that pupils would rather have the opportunity to redraft their work, a pleasing aspect of controlled assessment is that it rewards ability and hard work. Marks are a more accurate reflection of the pupil's true ability.

This half term we will be doing the linked study, comparing choices in *Frankenstein* and *Romeo and Juliet*. It will be interesting to see how pupils respond to using the laptops compared with hand writing. Hopefully, this third controlled assessment will see pupils and teachers become increasingly accustomed to the requirements of the new specification.

Shakespeare and Controlled Assessment

by Peter Thomas, Principal Moderator GCSE English Literature

Enhanced status and scope for Shakespeare study

There are many good things about the new GCSE specifications in English and Literature, but nothing quite as good as the boost given to Shakespeare study. As in the legacy specification, it's good that teachers have free choice of the Shakespeare text to study, even if, for many, this amounts to one of the four staples of the English stock cupboard. What's even better is that Shakespeare now has more status in the English Literature markshare. He used to be worth 10% of a literature certificate as coursework. He's now worth a more appropriate and deserving 25% as controlled assessment, if you choose to make Shakespeare linked to an ELH text an invitation to do two Shakespeare texts.

So, an increased markshare and free choice of texts should tempt English teachers to go beyond the staple four – or to link them with another play, chosen to provide an interesting similarity or contrast. This enhanced scope becomes particularly enticing and exciting as the:

- task bank is based on some broad categories
- tasks can be adapted to suit your students' needs.

The focus features of:

- love
- conflict
- choices
- central characters

allow some flexibility and creativity in customised task-setting for your students. What's needed is a willingness to see how:

- a focus on central characters can serve, and be served by, an interesting link between texts
- conflict can be interpreted as a feature of two texts
- love, or its absence, can help to make a linked pair interesting, illuminating and accessible.

Text linkage

There's plenty of scope for giving the favourites a new spin with some enabling linkage:



- *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear* – fathers and daughters
- *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* – warriors who find military strength is not enough
- *Twelfth Night* and *Comedy of Errors* – making much of mistaken identity
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing* – lovers divided and together.

Some teachers will, I hope, be tempted to make enterprising use of their enthusiasm and specialist expertise. How about:

- *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry V* – development of character across a series
- *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives of Windsor* – exploiting a character across a range of plays (Falstaff)
- *Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* – outsiders
- *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Troilus and Cressida* – trust and treachery.

Depending on the ability and stamina of your students, there are pairings that can take students where no others have gone before. I'm not suggesting intense study of the whole text here, but close focus on part of a text, based, of course, on a grasp of the whole text. Spend some time this weekend conjuring with a few of the possibilities:



- *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* – love at different ages
- *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus* – action and inaction
- *The Tempest* and *Measure for Measure* – temptation and choice
- *Richard II* and *Henry V* – leadership
- *Richard III* and Iago in *Othello* – self-proclaimed villains.

There's much to think about, given the rich and open possibilities. Where, for example, can we find a place at last for *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*? Is there anything we can get out of *Pericles* or *Cymbeline*? Could we find a uniquely pleasing source of classroom energy in exploring the dramatic function of banquets in *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus*? Well, perhaps not yet... but there are interesting links that cry out for attention, such as *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* – plays within plays. It's the job of the literature team to start work now on the next task bank, setting tasks that help to re-invigorate Shakespeare study as one of the perks of the new specification.

Authorial craft

There are other advantages in the new specification. The task bank itself builds on patient work over a series of Principal Examiner reports, to wean students



away from character description to authorial craft in characterisation. The task bank's choice between themes and ideas and characterisation and voice is a strong signal here. It should mean the end of those hopelessly unproductive tasks such as 'Who is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?'. Some tasks are best approached through active and collaborative group preparation before starting individual controlled assessments. This provides a helpful sequence of study, presentation, critical dialogue and reflection before approaching a task.

Engagement

There's another strong signal in the Literature controlled assessment mark scheme. Apart from the key word band hierarchy of limited/some/clear/assured/sophisticated, there is another hierarchy embedded within the qualitative terms of the bands:

- Band 5 'engagement'
- Band 4 'appreciation'
- Band 3 'understanding'
- Band 2 'familiarity'
- Band 1 'awareness'.

It's the high status for 'engagement' that is useful here. Whilst 'analytical' and 'evaluative' still occupy the top band descriptors, 'engagement' is a strong signal of getting to grips with a text in a way not traditionally regarded as cerebral or cognitive – a signal that active involvement with a text may be demonstrated by performative insight.

Personal and cultural alternative responses

The new AO4, for example, is a liberating re-working of the previous AO4. Now it's not just a matter of 'social, cultural and historical', which has, too often, resulted in bolting on naively applied facts (eg 'Dickens was born in Portsmouth in 1904' or 'People believed in witches then and James 1 wrote a book about them') but a uniting of personal response within a context of time, culture and place:

'explain how texts have been influential and significant to self and other readers in different contexts and at different times.'

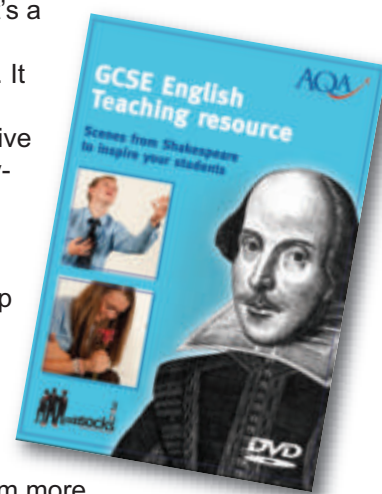
Performance

Equally welcome in the new specification is the encouragement to approach the written text through performance, either professional or classroom-based. Several task bank titles for controlled assessment make explicit reference to doing more than reading Shakespeare. Watching and doing Shakespeare are desirable and engaging preparations for studying the printed work as the basis for imaginative realisation

for public entertainment. This emphasis on the performative potential of the play-script appears in references to how lines may be read by professionals or in students' own readings.

AQA/Oddsocks DVD

Many of the plus points listed above are boosted by the DVD resulting from the joint venture between AQA and the Oddsocks theatre group. This collection of alternative versions of scenes from five plays is not a single-play revision guide: it's a resource for all students, whatever play(s) they study. It can be used to establish a sound critical and appreciative method of approaching play-text. This method makes students confident with the way that editing, directing, acting and producing all help to make printed texts appealing, relevant and alive. It can also be a central part of the multi-modal experience of Shakespeare that makes him more than an obligatory read.



Keep us in touch with your controlled assessment tasks

Finally, a plea from the moderating team.... We need examples of students' work for annual standardising. We are looking for good examples of enterprising texts and text links, and adaptations of our tasks that prompt lively and engaged student responses. We need them for the next round of standardising materials to help more teachers understand that we can now clear away some of the conventional approaches which have clogged the coursework store and left some students believing Shakespeare was no more than a novelist with a penchant for dialogue.

There's so much in the new specification for teachers and students to enjoy, so much to enhance classroom practice as well as teaching and learning. Best wishes to all who make the most of the new possibilities with Shakespeare study. Let us know what you're doing and you may see your students' work in forthcoming articles or standardising packages. Your unique angle could become the task of choice for English teachers everywhere.

Peter Thomas' book The Complete Shakespeareance: active approaches for the classroom is available from the National Association for the Teaching of English.

Personalising learning: the co-delivery of GCSE English and Media Studies

Rachel Braniff, Head of English at Tabor Science College, Braintree, tells us about leading a new initiative in her school. Rachel is an AQA moderator/examiner for GCSE English and GCSE Media Studies.



As Head of a large English and Media Faculty, I am responsible for creating a curriculum that offers all my students the chance to achieve their potential. What's more, as a teacher of English and Media Studies, I have become increasingly aware of the potential to exploit links between the two subjects.

Making links

Having seen how skills developed in Media Studies enabled students to approach English in a more informed, confident manner, we decided to offer English and Media Studies as a dual course. At first, as we had not taught either of the new specifications, my teachers were apprehensive. The majority were English specialists and the long-term plan we considered involved each teaching the Media and English combination over the following three academic years. However, as the team was introduced to the specifications, they soon realised that the skills and knowledge required to teach English Language, Literature and Media Studies are

all interchangeable. After all, English teachers are already teachers of texts. They analyse and explore:

- language
 - presentation
 - appeal to the target audience
- some of the core elements of Media Studies.

English teachers also use learning from the reading of texts to produce creative texts – another key strand of Media Studies.

Media Studies involves four key concepts:

- Language
 - Audience
 - Institution
 - Representation
- all important ideas in English too. The external and controlled assessment in Media Studies involve commenting on texts in relation to:
- the exploration of appeal to the audience

- the representation of character
- detailed analysis and interpretation of language.

What's more, writing tasks in English/English Language Unit 1 greatly benefit from the exploration of institutions and the media industry.

English teachers will be familiar with using strategies such as Point, Evidence, Explain and PALLPS – Purpose, Audience, Language, Layout, Presentation and Structure. These are great tools for English, but also central tools for Media Studies. The combination of skills for:

- analysis and exploration of texts
- communication of ideas and findings
- imagination and creativity

are fundamental principles in both subject areas, therefore creating a perfect link for co-delivery.

Curriculum routes

After prolonged and often lively discussion, my department decided to offer two curriculum routes to our students:

- the first, a two year delivery of GCSE English Literature and GCSE English Language
- the second, a two year delivery of GCSE English and GCSE Media Studies.

In addition, we wanted to encourage our Language and Literature students to take Media Studies as an option as we felt strongly this would strengthen and develop a whole range of skills.

Our first step was to put in place a carefully managed programme of information and guidance for students and parents. We already had a Media Studies unit of work as part of the Year 9 schemes of learning, so students had some familiarity with the idea of Media within English. We held launch lunches for all Year 9 students and presented them with an introduction to Media Studies, exemplars of work and the chance to chat with current Media Studies students. Flyers were sent home, explaining the course to parents and they were invited to an options fair, where staff discussed the course that their son/daughter would be taking and offered a chance to ask questions.

In selecting students for particular curriculum routes, decisions were made using our most valuable tools: summative data, predictive data and teacher assessment. Discussions with students and parents took place and, once presented with the idea of 'personalised learning' and 'individual achievement', both groups were on board and fully supportive of our plans.

Once the English controlled assessment tasks were released, we were able to begin detailed planning, using a common strand that would run through the two GCSEs. For this year, the strand of study is 'representation and central character'. Study of this theme will weave a way through all three controlled assessments for English and the three for Media Studies. Each controlled assessment will build on previous learning and understanding throughout the delivery of the two courses.

Furthermore, this design of two routes enables students to take GCSEs further:

- English Language and Literature students can take GCSE Media Studies as an option subject
- English and Media Studies students can take GCSE Media Studies double award as an option subject in year 11.

This personalised pathway is not about excluding students from Literature study as this forms a core element of GCSE English.

Inclusion and achievement

There is scope for GCSE Media Studies to be delivered alongside GCSE English Language and GCSE Literature, as the controlled assessment tasks for the Spoken Language Study will benefit from the skills developed in GCSE Media Studies, as will the external assessment. This is something we will be considering for some of our next students. Our aim is 'inclusion for all' through providing students with the same chances, the only difference being the subject of study.

Since leading this initiative in my school, I have visited other centres to advise them on how they too can offer these two GCSEs to their students. I have directed them to support at aqa.org.uk and informed them of the work of AQA's co-delivery subject advisors. I am also currently working with the continuing professional development department, writing a course that should be available in the spring term.

One question I have been asked frequently is 'why do I believe in this co-delivery model?' and my answer is simple. I just point them in the direction of student achievement. Data analysis at my centre has shown that students who study Media Studies have the potential to do better in English than those who have not. Our school aim is excellence through learning and I feel that personalised pathways are key to achieving this goal.

To get in touch with a subject adviser trained to support the co-delivery of AQA GCSE English and Media, e-mail: smcguire@aqa.org.uk

Stretching and challenging at A-Level

Senior Subject Manager, Ulrike Strelow, writes about our online CPD seminars

The 'stretch and challenge' requirement at A2 is evident in our specifications. In **GCE English Language B**, students need to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of major research ideas
- study language beyond its immediate context by looking at geographical, social and temporal contexts
- work with more demanding data to develop critical insights informed by ideas from language study.

They are equipped to work independently by selecting their approach to data study within a genre based framework. Language investigations require students to conceptualise a task, formulate an approach and collect data to carry out independent analysis and evaluation.

In **GCE English Literature A**, the stretch and challenge requirement is met by the use of a range of question types. The comparative study in coursework and the general exam questions are all open answer format, requiring students to assemble appropriate material and structure questions. In the exam paper, students need to refer to and make use of knowledge and understanding of Literature across the ages, genres and gender to support their responses to the unprepared extracts.

To provide teachers with insights into stretch and challenge at A2, AQA's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Department offered a new programme of web-conferences in the autumn term.

These online seminars focussed on the theme of Stretch and Challenge and complemented the Teacher Support Feedback sessions on A2 for English Literature A and English Language B. The web-conferences were delivered live, online, by our Principal Examiners.

The seminar's main purpose was to provide guidance about the characteristics of high performance at A2 and the teaching strategies that make a difference in the classroom.

Content included:

- stretch and challenge demands in the relevant A2 units
- suggestions to help students respond to A2's stretch and challenge demands
- strategies for teaching more able students effectively
- features of high quality exemplar coursework and written paper responses
- 'chat' sessions, polling activities and marking exercises.

Further online seminars are planned for the spring term. For more information, see: aqa.org.uk/cpdonline

Introducing...

AQA is delighted to introduce Jean Hudson, the new Senior Subject Manager for GCSE English. Jean has taught English and been Head of English for many years. Most recently, she has been working as secondary English consultant in a Local Authority. 'I am pleased to join AQA at such an interesting time of change,' she says.

Jean believes a key aspect of her role is supporting teachers, something she has a wealth of experience in. 'It is important that teachers are at the heart of everything we do,' she explains, 'so that they are in a position to help pupils achieve and do their best.'



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