AS AND A LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

F672/F674

A GUIDE TO AS AND A LEVEL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COURSEWORK

A Case Study Approach from The Sixth Form College, Solihull

BRINGING ENGLISH TO LIFE

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The Sixth Form College, Solihull is a large 16-18 College with over 2000 students. Approximately 40% of students come from non-White British ethnic backgrounds. The student population is drawn from over 30 feeder schools in the Solihull/Birmingham and Warwickshire areas.

Around 100 students opt for the Language and Literature AS qualification, (other options are English Literature, and English Language) with an average class size of 23. About 2/3rds of the students are female. The average GCSE mean for the cohort is approximately 6.00.

The following case study is based on our experiences of teaching F672/F674.
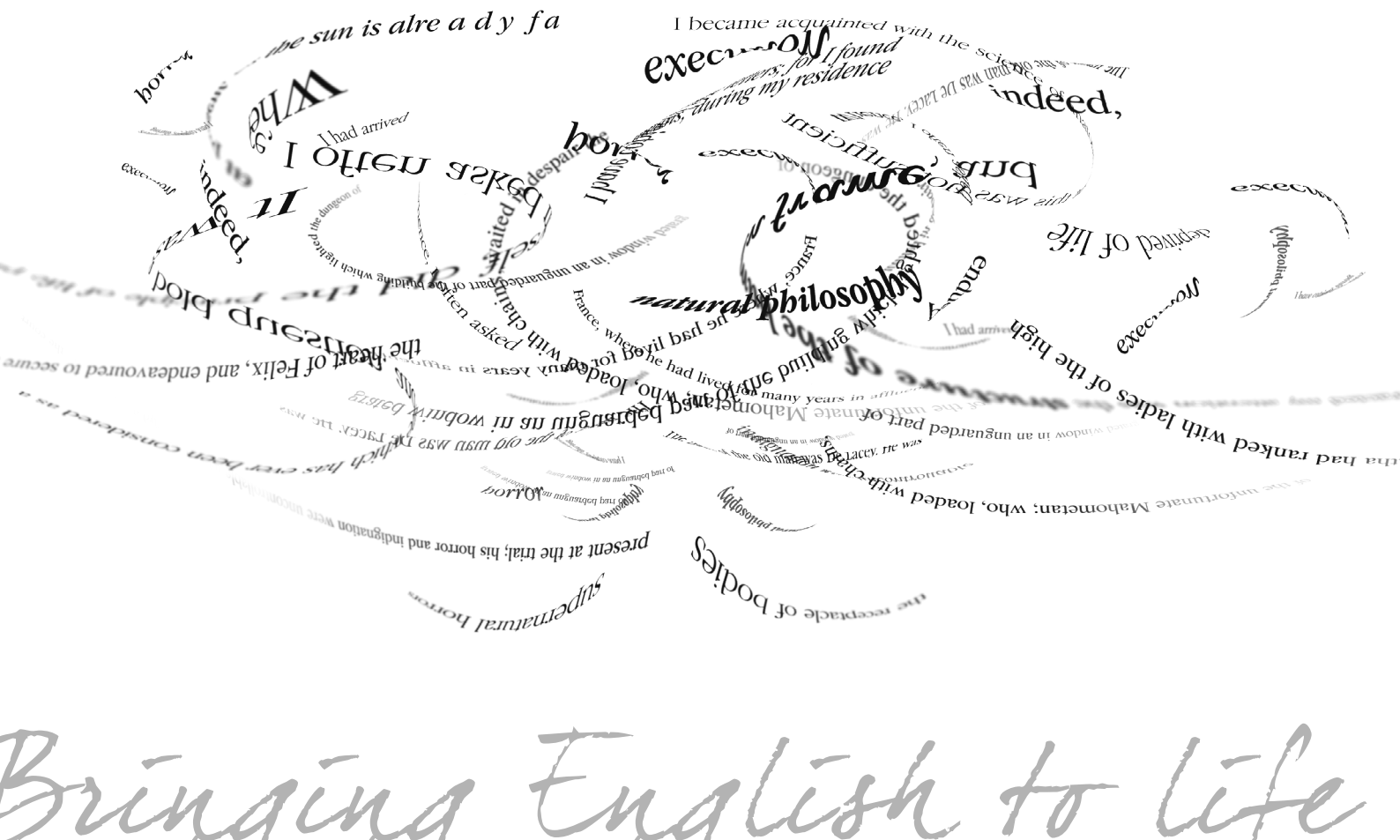
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PREPARING TO TEACH THE COURSEWORK UNIT

1. Introduction to the multimodal approach to textual analysis

Enabling students to understand the principles on which the coursework is based as early in the teaching period as possible, will reap dividends. One way to ensure your students are well-briefed and 'inducted' into the purpose and philosophy of the coursework is to set a risk free trial run. At the Sixth Form College, Solihull, we have used our Welcome to College Days in June in this way. Depending on when in your scheme of work for the year you are planning to deliver the coursework, this could just as well be set as an induction activity in the first half term.

A short extract from a text is paired with the matching scene from the multimodal version. In the first activity, the text is read out and in groups students work to answer questions, focusing on narrative methods used by the writer such as dialogue, setting, viewpoint.

After a short discussion, students are given a second set of questions, which focus on how the multimodal transforms these methods. This time they focus on lighting, sound, editing and camera angles, prosodics and paralinguistics.

They watch the clip and discuss their findings before sharing, in a whole class discussion, how meaning is changed or enhanced through multimodality.

If you are short of time, students can then simply write up a comparison of the text and multimodal extract explored in the lesson, picking from a list of differentiated title-prompts. Such titles, which are designed to enable students to grasp the principles of multimodality, could be:

(a) What techniques have been used by the director of the film and the writer of the text to convey the key meaning of this scene to their audience? (Straightforward)

(b) In what ways is the meaning of the textual extract changed by its multimodal re-imagining? (More challenging)

(c) How has the director of the multimodal re-imagined the literary text for its audience and purpose? (Challenging)

If you have more time available, it is very developmental for the students to try to apply the learning in the lesson to a different pairing of texts. Some differentiated suggestions follow:

Choices might include:

Text	Multimodal	Level of Difficulty
The Perks of Being a Wallflower (Stephen Chbosky,) 1999	The Perks of Being a Wallflower (Stephen Chbosky,) 2012	Straightforward
Ender's Game (Orson Scott Card) 1985	Ender's Game (Gavin Hood) 2013	
A Christmas Carol (Charles Dickens) 1843	The Muppet Christmas Carol (Brian Henson) 1992	
		More Challenging
The story of Noah (Genesis Chapter 6 The Bible)	Noah (Darren Aronofsky) 2014	
Emma (Jane Austen) 1815	Clueless (Amy Heckerling) 1995	
The Birds (Daphne du Maurier) 1952	The Birds (Alfred Hitchcock) 1963	
		Very Challenging
Hamlet (William Shakespeare) 1603	The Lion King (Rob Minkoff/Roger Allers) 1994	
Cloud Atlas (David Mitchell) 2004	Cloud Atlas (The Wachowskis) 2012	
The Life of Pi (Yan Martell) 2001	The Life of Pi (Ang Lee) 2012	

Students are asked to read their selected text, watch the multimodal and write a 500 word analysis of the ways in which the meaning of the text has been changed, enhanced by its multimodal version. At Solihull, this task becomes a homework set across the summer holiday. The outcome is handed in on the first day of term in September. Teachers are then able to use the responses for formative assessment, for groupings of students by ability and as an early model for Task 1. Successful examples or teacher models can be uploaded to Moodle to support students when they are beginning their Task 1 coursework.

However you choose to introduce the coursework unit, it is of paramount importance that the concept of multimodality is clearly established. There are a number of useful definitions online **http://file.scirp.org/Html/21634.html**, including one from Ofsted, which can be sourced in an IT lesson and then broken down and applied to a given text. The text can then, as in the examples above, be analysed for the different but equally important ways the different modes of sound, vision etc. create meaning for the reader. Students are used to multimodality but have not consciously 'read' it in this way, so this exercise is simply about moving from the subconsciously known to the consciously known and defined.

2.   Suitable textual pairings for the coursework

There are a number of factors to take into consideration when deciding on paired texts for the live coursework module. For example:

(i)   **Length of both texts:** A relatively short text e. the story of Noah, can be made into a very long multimodal and vice versa, so if you only have six weeks for this unit, a short written text or a short multimodal can be an advantage if you are planning to 'teach' the complete texts. However, if you are planning to look at sections only, then your choices are much wider.

(ii)   **Accessibility of texts:** If you are planning to 'teach' the texts completely then clearly you can pick more demanding texts. However, it is rewarding and developmental for students to be given their own choice of texts, in which case careful guidance is essential to ensure the student's ability matches their text choices.

(iii)   **Flexibility of texts:** It is VITAL to avoid a whole class set of similar answers. Your text must enable different questions to be asked of it. If you are using one source text only, then a set of differentiated questions for Task 1 becomes essential. The source text must also be sufficiently flexible to enable useful and appropriate Task 2s to be drawn from it.

(iv)   **Degree to which the multimodal varies from its source text:** The richest Task 1 responses are often the result of multimodals that do not 'copy' the source text too closely. A parody, an updating, a change of cultural setting, a change of genre, all offer students the opportunity to write meaningfully about differences and similarities.

If you are a large team, with more than one teacher delivering the specification, it can be very useful to agree a common text that you will use for teaching 'how to' write the coursework, but which will not be used for the 'real thing'. This creates a consistency across a department in how to deliver the coursework, but also then enables teachers to pursue their own interests in textual pairings for the actual coursework. There is no doubt that teachers are most effective in delivery when they enjoy the texts they teach and have the freedom to pursue those interests.

3.   Concepts, approaches and terminology

The assessment objectives for the coursework are clear about the need to apply concepts, approaches and terminology learned from integrated literary and linguistic study to the analysis of texts. For most students coming from GCSE, the meaning of the term 'integrated study' will not become apparent for some time. Students will tend to assume this means literary analysis of the kind they have been practising for years. However, the joy of the combined A level is that you have the freedom to apply whatever approach to the analysis of a literary (and for Task 1, media) text, yields the most meaningful outcome. It is one of the keys to success in the coursework that students understand this new-found freedom and are taught to value not be daunted by it. This is the challenge for teachers of the Language and Literature specification, as, without doubt, the study of grammar, linguistics and discourse is very daunting. Students have had years to learn about literary terms and how to analyse their effects, they now have just a few weeks to acquire what they need for integrated study.

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A glossary of (i) narrative methods (ii) discourse terms (iii) grammatical terms (iv) media terms will be of help, (we have used coloured terminology mats successfully as glossaries). Even more use will be interactive learning on Moodle (games such as Kahoot https://getkahoot.com/ for example) where teachers devise competitive quizzes on the computer to consolidate current grammatical knowledge against a 'Countdown' style clock. Or you can use Grammaticus cards - these cards are colour coded according to word class and can be used as part of interactive whole class teaching or for independent study.

The cards can be purchased from the English and Media Centre at http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/cat_detail.php?itemID=534. .You can play word class snap or rummy or racing demons (the pack comes with suggestions) along with constant reinforcement in the classroom. Students need to be as comfortable writing about complex noun phrases, negative politeness and extreme close ups as they are about metaphors. In practice, students are often relatively confident with the language of media to describe particular aural or visual effects.

Additionally, careful focus on key scenes from the multimodal, ensuring students have the discourse terms to describe the impact of dialogue and prosodic features, will usually be sufficient for these elements of integrated study. It is the linguistic and grammatical features in the texts which will require specific and ongoing teaching. The ability to write about these features and their effects is at the heart of this specification and students need to be comfortable applying their understanding, not just to the coursework but also to the examination texts.

Intensive teaching of grammatical and linguistic concepts and approaches is therefore how we begin our AS course at the Sixth Form College, Solihull. It is these elements that are the most challenging and which require constant re-enforcement, not only at AS but right through A2. You are just as likely to find an A2 student struggling to determine whether a feature is an adverbial or a noun phrase as a first term AS student. A little and often seems to reap the best rewards.

We begin with word classes and gradually work our way up to phrases, clauses and sentences. Teaching of grammatical concepts need not be dry. It can be rooted in the world of the students, as they are surrounded by language.

One activity for example, that works really well is finding the noun phrases in Ed Sheeran's 'A Team', available at http://www.lyrics.com/a-team-lyrics-ed-sheeran.html after which, working in pairs/groups, they write their own noun phrase lyric/poem. Giving students 'real world' examples will help bed in these unfamiliar concepts. One colleague gives students 10 minutes to walk around a given area of the College and note as many noun phrases as they can find on posters, notices etc.

Short extracts from the source text or from the dialogue of the multimodal, with key features underlined make excellent starter activities as pairs/groups/ identify the underlined features and work together to comment on their effects. Writing up and sharing these short pieces of integrated analysis help students build up towards writing their actual coursework.

Regular 'spot tests' set by you or by the students will also help to keep the learning 'fresh'. A little and often is by far the best way to bed-in these unfamiliar concepts and terms.

4. Peer Assisted Learning

At Solilhull, one way we try to mitigate the difficulties experienced by students as they gradually acquire the terms and concepts required for integrated analysis, is the study group. In the first six weeks of term, following our formative assessment and using our data from examination results, students are grouped together with the express purpose of providing peer support. Not all lessons are taught in study groups, but where peer support will be necessary as part of the planned learning, then this is an excellent way to ensure that all students are able to access the knowledge and understanding.

Peer Assisted Learning is particularly important because students can only receive limited input on their coursework from teachers. The specification makes it very clear that teachers may work on shaping the question for Task 1 and in guiding the structures of Tasks 1 and 2, but once drafting is underway, teachers can only offer general feedback. Ensuring peers can work meaningfully with the Assessment Objectives and fully comprehend the integrated approach is therefore a very useful means of giving support to students.

Specific activities that can be undertaken using peer assessment during drafting include (i) giving students a list of features a 'good piece' would contain. Working in study groups, students search for these features in each other's work, noting (numbering/highlighting/underlining) where they are found. Good examples can then be shared, and students who lack these features in their work can see exactly how they need to amend their drafts. (ii) teaching a short starter on common errors in students' work from apostrophes to homophones and asking students to work in pairs to check each other's work is free from these errors (iii) giving students the assessment criteria and asking them to self-assess their drafts. What grade would they give it? They underline the relevant words from each assessment objective that best match their work. They then swap with a partner who has not seen the self-assessment grade. The partner then repeats the process. This uncovers students who both under-reward and over-reward their work and leads to a very useful plenary on what students who have a Band 3 need to do to get to Band 4 etc.

Mentoring is another method we have used at Solihull. A2 students offer targeted support to AS students (teacher directed) to enable students to achieve their best. For the most able, it offers stretch and challenge as the mentors often find new angles on an issue or a creative approach for Task 2 that has not been considered. For the middle ranking, a mentor can show them which points could be better developed and for the least able, a mentor will ensure that the coursework matches the assessment objectives, as it is often understanding what the coursework is, that is the challenge. Student voice feedback has identified mentoring as being highly valued by and productive for our AS students, many of whom become mentors themselves at A2.

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TASK ONE – COMPARISON OF LITERARY TEXT WITH MULTIMODAL

1. Delivering the texts

AO3, Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception. A useful way to begin delivering the teaching of your chosen text/s (depending on how many you have time for in your unit) is by setting out areas that can be compared meaningfully. Examples might be characterisation, structure (for example openings and endings), genre, audience and purpose (for instance where a film is made in a different culture such as 'Bride and Prejudice' or the BBC 'Canterbury Tales' series, or where a version is a parody or re-versioned for a teenage audience such as 'O' or 'Clueless'). As you read through your text and watch your multimodal you can then assign particular groups to look at and report back on these aspects. The advantage of this approach is that it ensures students are thinking comparatively from the beginning and it also gives students a possible structure and focus for Task 1. It is not fair or appropriate for all students to be writing on the same title and therefore by identifying from the outset, areas which are productive, as a comparative focus, you ensure students are working effectively from the first lesson with a full awareness that there are many valid ways to compare and contrast.

If working with a longer text, such as a complete novel, it is useful to teach the extracts which are most fruitful for comparison with the multimodal, with suggestions as to where else a student might go in the novel in order to extend the analysis in different ways.

Easy student access to the multimodal is paramount as the best Task 1 responses will give very detailed analysis of specific moments, sometimes, shot by shot. If the multimodal is not available on your intranet or via internet sites then it is important that the key scenes are robustly analysed in class with detailed notes taken. One of the ways students lose marks in Task 1 is by being vague about what is on the screen or by giving unspecific references.

Because of the restrictions on teacher intervention, 'modelling' and shared writing become vital teaching techniques. For example, using a Moodle Forum a piece of student work can be shared with students, working individually in pairs or groups.

Students are then asked to rewrite/improve it according to specific criteria. The Forum allows for the students and the teacher to focus on the most successful and explore it together in class.

Clearly, working with past student coursework is also extremely helpful. As this has been graded already, students can see exactly how the Assessment criteria have been applied. In this way, students understand what the difference is between 'competent' and 'detailed and developed' in the Assessment Objectives, for example.

2. Drafting and giving feedback

At Solihull we have found that students are only ready to move to a complete draft when they have:

(i) Understood what the purpose of the coursework is ie what skills is it assessing?

(ii) Found a productive comparative focus which enables depth without requiring excessive length.

(iii) Acquired the required concepts, approaches and terminology for the integrated approach and are able to explore the various effects of their use.

The use of a 'risk-free' attempt, the work in groups and the peer assessment of short practice pieces all help to prepare students for their assessed drafts.

The specification is clear that writing frames are not allowed, however, discussion of structure is, therefore it is very useful to spend the time in class going over what will make a coherent response. Students can then make a checklist of areas which they need to include such as:

(i) Discussion of the different contexts of production and reception of the source text and the multimodal

(ii) Genre considerations and how they would affect expectations

(iii) Core concepts/motifs/symbols in both texts and how they are conveyed in the different media

(iv) Productive comparisons of lexical choices in both texts

(v) Evaluation of the outcomes of choices made by the writers/directors for their audiences

(vi) Secondary sources – for example, has the writer of the source text commented on the multimodal version? What have critics said of the book and multimodal?

It is also vital, if a student has set themselves a question to answer, eg 'What is the impact of ...?' 'How has the multimodal changed….?', that they answer the question in the essay!

It is very useful at this point to encourage the students to prepare and peer assess plans with projected word counts. Ensuring that sufficient weight in the essay is given to particular components is essential for an outcome which gains a higher grade.

The drafting itself can be broken up into sections. Students can write their draft openings which can be shared and critiqued in class as part of the peer assessment/self-assessment process. Students can then write their linked first paragraph which goes through the same process and so on. This is a slow process but it ensures that all students are focussed on the assessment objectives and understand what a 'good one looks like'.

When the draft finally comes in for teacher assessment, the most productive feedback will be given in a one to one discussion question and answer session with the teacher. We have suspended teaching for a week (while students work on Task 2 drafts independently) in order to facilitate this. Students take notes in this session based on the discussion and come up with a list of amendments needed.

A final peer assessment takes place (or a session with A2 mentors is arranged) before the final piece comes in based on the checklist of 'virtues' a 'good one' would demonstrate. In this way, students can be absolutely sure that they have focused on the assessment objectives.

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TASK TWO – ARTEFACT AND COMMENTARY

1. Understanding 're-imagining'

Task 2 can be the graveyard of hopes for students, if they are not very carefully guided. The creative piece MUST work as a realised artefact in its own right for a given audience and purpose. Critically, the semiotic of the source text must be retained in the process of the re-imagining. One of the texts we have used very successfully, is 'The Rain Horse' by Ted Hughes, a short story in which an unidentified young man travels across a once familiar but now rain-soaked landscape where he encounters a mysterious horse who appears to terrorise him. There is an excellent short multimodal by the BBC directed by Sebastian Goodwin which re-imagines this but keeps the semiotic of the source text for a new genre and audience. Thus, the changes made to the source text do not change its core meaning although it is now a short 'thriller'. To successfully re-imagine 'The Rain Horse', students would need to come up with a Task 2 that retained the focus on landscape, included a mysterious and threatening force which inexplicably targets an unprepared individual who expects a pleasant encounter with the environment, but experiences the opposite, producing a moment of epiphany. Once this is understood students can then experiment with genres, settings, viewpoints, characterisations to find one that works. We have had very successful mangas, noir graphic novels set in the past and in the future, ballet versions and even an opera. For the brightest students, parody and pastiche is also an option, as is taking these elements and working them into an episode of a well-known comedy such as 'Family Guy', 'The Simpsons' and 'The Big Bang Theory.' Students, when they tackle Task Two therefore, must begin with the core meaning of the source text and keep that at the centre of their thinking and planning.

Additionally, whatever medium they choose, they need to ensure the outcome is 'fit for purpose' for its new genre and audience. The best way to approach Task 2, we have found, is through (i) giving genre types that have worked well in the past such as graphic novels, screen plays, websites, computer games, phone apps etc (ii) insisting that students use style models in their chosen genres. The style models ensure that the correct conventions are used for the chosen genre, and help students understand what lexical choices are appropriate.

We have also found that a one to one with students before they begin their Task 2 artefact is the most effective way to ensure the artefact is a genuine re-imagining, has an appropriate audience and purpose, and matches the requirements of the genre. A set of prompt questions might be:

(i) What other mode than text will you use? We often have to remind students that voice is only one mode so if they are writing an extract from a play or a dramatic monologue, they must consider other ways meaning is shaped and ensure that there is a good balance between the various modes eg setting/lighting/props/proxemics. The balance between the elements will enrich the commentary. (Students can often forget to comment on all the modes used and how they work together when they write their commentaries, so this is a good point to remind them that they MUST COMMENT ON THESE MODES IN THE COMMENTARY. There is little point in including additional modes if the commentary then only analyses how one mode has been used).

(ii) In what ways have you re-imagined the source text? This usually helps to steer students away from **inappropriate Task choices** (eg a conversation in Tweets between the main characters or a board game based on the text) towards the kind of genre choices which are far more likely to generate a successful outcome. Some students become convinced that the task is about 'making' and want to do scrapbooks, or diaries with pictures, or sculptures!

Digging in to ask how such an artefact creates a meaningful new version soon disabuses students of these fanciful and misguided notions. (A useful indication that a student is going in the wrong direction is if they start talking about 'tea-staining' or actual 'objects' – the process is purely paper-based.)

(iii) Who is the audience for your artefact and how will you ensure it's appropriate for this audience? We have found that the least successful Task 2s come from students who want to target younger audiences. The most successful tend to go either for niche audiences (Tumblr for example) or fans of graphic novels, or for audiences from different cultures. Of course, depending on the artefact, the audience may be the same as for the literary/multimodal text. Asking the student to bring in their 'style model' for this question in the discussion is often invaluable. Talking to a student about their audience and purpose also enables discussion about lexical choices and how they will be made and commented on.

(iv) How can you produce a meaningful paper-based version of your artefact? Sometimes students become so wrapped up in their creativity that they forget that all that is required is a paper based version. It is very important therefore to remind students that even if they are planning a 'film' that all that they will submit will be storyboards and a screenplay, with, possibly, screenshots of anything they film.

2.   Checkpoint Charlie

Creating checkpoints to ensure artefacts are not 'taking over' is another important part of the coursework process. Students tend to have very powerful 'ownership' of the artefacts and discussions can sometimes be painful when you have to explain that a set of beautifully crafted 'glove puppets' will not successfully re-imagine 'Romeo and Juliet'!

Again peer and mentor assessment, as well as a selection of successful Task 2 work from previous years for use as models, should ensure that students are keeping to the 'straight and narrow'.

3.   The Commentary

It is surprising how many students fail to exploit the good work in their artefacts in their commentary. It is very useful therefore to pair the students for commentary work.

The pair takes each other's artefacts and to a list of prompts find material there for the commentary. Such prompts might be:

(i) What genre features have been used to re-imagine the source texts for its new audience and purpose? List them.

(ii) How have colour/graphology/proxemics been used etc to shape meaning? Note as many examples as you can.

(iii) What lexical choices have been made in the artefact that link back to the source text and enable the artefact to be appropriate for its given audience and purpose? Note them and their significance in successfully re-imagining the source text.

(iv) What features can you show me that remain true to the semiotic of the original source text?

Students/mentors are then able to work together to plan and draft their commentaries, ensuring that integrated analysis is used throughout.

There is a tendency among lower band students to create commentaries which are 'process driven' ie 'I did this, then I did that.' Use of model commentaries and focusing on evaluative and analytical language in whole class and small group sessions, will encourage such students to steer clear of the 'what I did' trap.

4.   Assessing Task Two

It is possible to assess the artefact then the commentary but it is generally more productive to see the artefact and commentary as 'one'. Again, we have found it useful to use one to one sessions to give feedback, using question prompts to enable students to be more self-reflective about their drafts.

As the artefact is assessed for A04, it is very helpful to break down this assessment objective into a checklist so that students understand how their artefact will be judged. For example:

(i) The artefact needs to match exactly its chosen genre conventions ie it needs to look like a 'real one'. The key term here is 'look like' not be. The artefact is paper based only, so if a musical has been written, the artefact would be an extract from the score and the libretto with perhaps a series of set designs. A ballet re-imagining (which was successfully realised by one of our students) contained a series of drawn pictures of the key dance sequences with the marketing materials (poster and programme notes).

(ii) The artefact needs to be adapted precisely for its audience and purpose, not just in terms of the visual or aural choices made but in the lexical choices made.

(iii) The artefact must demonstrate the creator knowingly used particular concepts and approaches learned as part of the course.

The commentary is only assessed for A01 and that means it is particularly important that students use 'integrated' analysis (ie of all modes used) and demonstrate mastery of linguistic and grammatical terms and their effects. A commentary which does not analyse the effects of lexical and syntactic choices cannot be given more than 3 out of 5, regardless of other merits.

Once again, the peer and mentor based approach will ensure students keep on track and produce material rooted in the assessment objectives, enabling you to be confident that the artefact and commentary will be fit for purpose.

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5. Assessment paperwork

At Solihull, we have found it useful to produce our own versions of the assessment scheme to ensure we are marking consistently as a centre and to ensure we are giving appropriate weight to particular objectives. We attach this to the coursework and it is invaluable in our internal moderation. We tend to highlight/underline the criteria/level we feel the student has achieved. This is far more useful in cross-checking than ticking for merit only on the actual coursework. It gives an objective set of measures for moderation discussions and ensures we are marking 'like for like' across teachers and students.

We particularly consider how far the students have come in understanding the philosophy and skills required for the combined course. There are some students who remain, at heart, literature students. They often have exceptional strengths in aspects of A02, but they cannot achieve the highest grades for A01 and A03 as they are not exploiting the other modes of shaping meaning that are a fundamental part of this particular course.

This paperwork is of course for our internal purposes and does not obviate the need to complete the coursework cover sheet required by the exam board. OCR is interested in final outcomes on their cover sheet, the internal sheets help them see how we reached them.
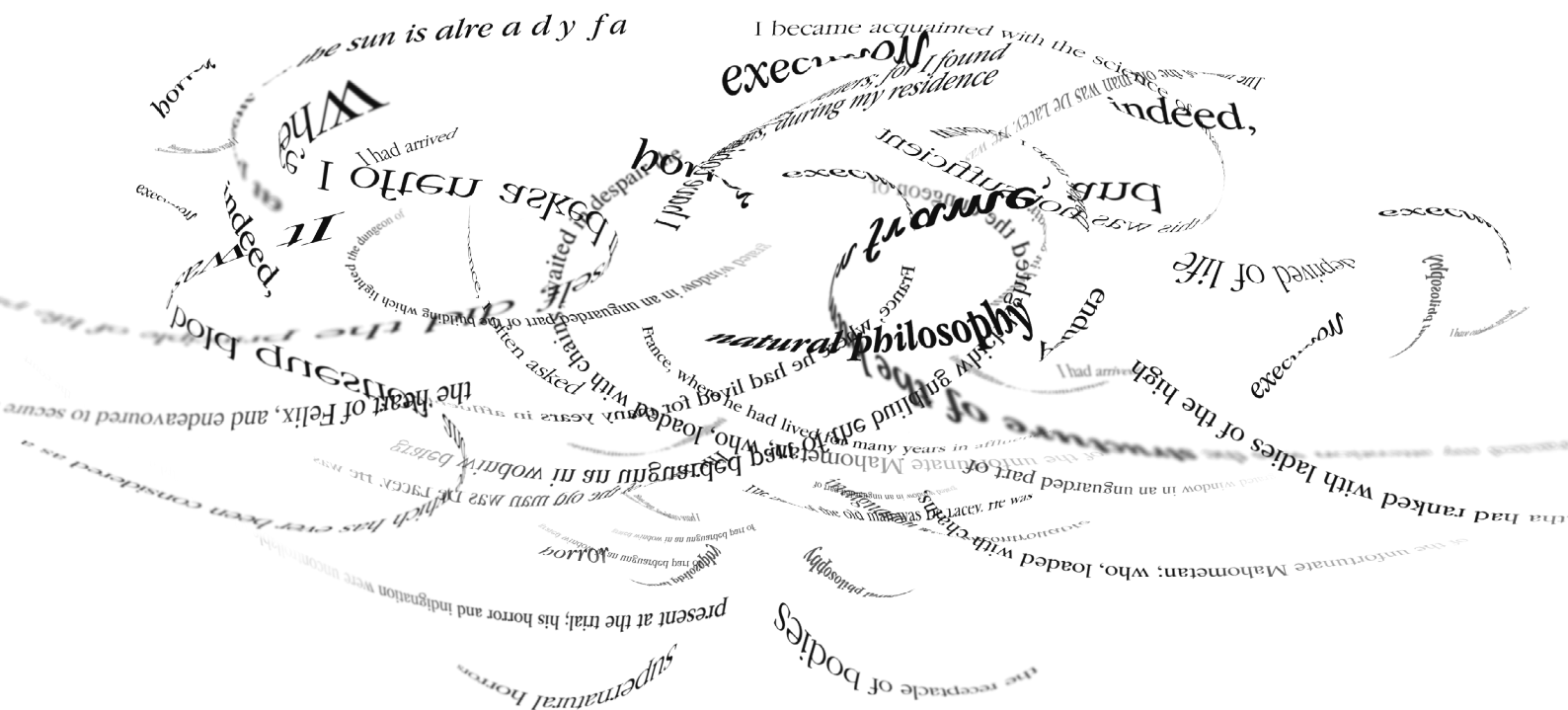
F674

PREPARING TO TEACH THE COURSEWORK UNIT

1. **Establishing understanding of the principles on which the coursework is based.**

This synoptic unit is designed to lead students to the kind of independent learning which will be required at undergraduate level. Consequently, success will result from:

(i) Teaching and reinforcing research skills, particularly the ability to separate the 'wheat from the chaff'.

(ii) Giving the students the guided confidence to pursue their own particular literary and linguistic interests.

(iii) Exposing students to a sufficiently wide range of non-canonical texts for Task 1, and speech based genres for Task 2 to enable them to make appropriate individual coursework choices.

(iv) Ensuring students are fully aware of the level of complexity, depth and creativity required to achieve the higher grades. This awareness can be achieved through close analysis of OCR endorsed coursework from previous years.

In the same way that a risk-free trial is extremely helpful at AS, a similar approach can be taken at A2. At Solihull we have experimented with using the four/five week post exam return at AS to induct students into the rationale, suitable non-canonical texts and methods of research for F674.

This teaching block can also be used very productively to deliver a core text, if one is being used. In practice, we have found teaching a core text as a model for the coursework is very helpful in laying down the pathways students need to follow to find meaningful linked texts of their own. A colleague has successfully taught 'The Cement Garden' by Ian McEwan and other choices have included the poems of Allen Ginsberg with a specific focus on 'Howl'.

IT based lessons can then be used for students to research helpful linked texts and to start to put together a key question which they would be interested in answering next term.

However, we have always encouraged students, who have the initiative and aptitude, to pursue their own interests, once they understand what a substantial non-canonical text is, and the summer break is an ideal time for them to undertake reading and research in this regard.

In a class of 23 (our average size) of mixed ability students, we would typically therefore at the start of the A2 year have a mixed economy, with about half to two thirds pursuing their own texts and the remainder working on a key question on the core text which they will link with their own choices of a speech text and non-fiction text.

At Solihull, teachers of AS students will not necessarily be the teacher of the A2, nor do teachers teach the same non-canonical text in the summer term. Therefore students have to be the authors of their own coursework and not rely on teacher-led learning, this is an important step change towards independence at A2.

If you choose to cover the coursework unit in June and July, it will also be necessary to deliver a consolidation unit on research skills as part of it. Otherwise this teaching can be delivered in September. In order to research effectively students need to know how to:

(i) **Use secondary sources.** Students tend to make sweeping generalisations about context, in particular when dealing with contexts of reception. It is very important therefore that students are shown how to cross reference and how to use secondary references to support any assertions made.

(ii) **Footnote and use bibliographies using the Harvard system.** Many libraries have pre-made up resources for students which you can go through.

(iii) **Use library resources such as Oxford online and InfoTrac.**

Despite your best efforts you will still find many students who wish to rely purely on Wikipedia! Perhaps the most productive way to deal with this is to have such students read a properly researched piece then self-assess their own. Students are easily able to see they have self-limited their work as a result of inadequate secondary research.

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2.   Substantial non-canonical texts

Note: *OCR is reasonably flexible as to what counts as a non-canonical texts for the purposes of this coursework, but if you are unsure it is worth checking with the 'coursework consultancy' service. You should aim to select texts that push the boundaries of genre, or may have been received as 'controversial' in some way. A text that would not traditionally be set as an examination text for A level English Literature is a good place to start, including non-fiction texts.*

The joy of this coursework unit is the freedom it offers to students and teachers alike to explore texts that would not otherwise be studied at A level. Texts our students have successfully chosen as substantial and non-canonical have included:

- *'The Virgin Suicides'* – Jeffrey Euginedes

- *'The Screwtape Letters'* – C S Lewis

- *'The Reluctant Fundamentalist'* – Mosin Hamid

- *'The Life of Pi'* – Yan Martel

- *'Memoirs of a Geisha'* – Arthur Golden

- *'American Psycho'* – Brett Easton Ellis

- *'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep'?* – Phllip K Dick

- *'Selected speeches of Winston Churchill'*

- *'A Clockwork Orange'* – Anthony Burgess

- *'Collected Essays of George Orwell'*

Students tend to be more comfortable with literary texts as they have spent most of their English study time decoding narrative and literary methods. However, the richness and the diversity of non-fiction text choices can lead to some worthwhile and productive coursework. This year one of our core texts will be 'The Examined Life' by Stephen Grosz, which will work equally well as the main text or as the secondary non-fiction text.

It would, however, be very useful to spend teaching time on decoding non-fiction texts , as this helps all students when they come to select and analyse their linked piece. A selection of extracts from non-fiction genres from reportage to travel writing, which can be explored in class to establish conventions and methods used, will give confidence to students who may be interested in pursuing a non-literary text.

It is important, regardless of which type of text is selected, that students understand the reason their text is both non-canonical and culturally significant because analysis of the context of reception (AO3) forms part of the early part of their essay. To help with this understanding we teach a lesson with extracts from a number of texts (fiction/non-fiction) which students, working in groups, are asked to grade in comparison with a typical A Level literary text in terms of their expectations of the genre and their awareness of that text. For example, the lyrics of Bob Dylan songs would be a good choice, as might an extract from 'A Clockwork Orange' or '12 Years a Slave'.

This establishes for students that their texts may be non-canonical because of genre (eg non-fiction/ written for children); reception (eg too controversial), contemporary publication (ie they may become canonical in the future but it's too soon to know). It also helps establish that if they have heard of the text, it is likely to have some cultural significance. Exposure to extracts from a range of suitable texts also supports students keen to write on a text of their choice.

TASK ONE – THE SYNOPTIC UNIT

1.   Teaching the synoptic unit

The success or failure of an individual piece of coursework (once first principles have been understood) will largely rest on the links between the three texts (A03). Students often struggle to narrow down the connections to a single strand and in teaching terms therefore, working on the key question the coursework will answer will be invaluable.

Students can be presented with successful examples of key questions from previous years then asked to draft their own which are peer assessed in groups, in the form of some 'how will' questions to ensure the essays will be truly synoptic and well-focussed.

Once students have written their key question, the teacher can then take this in and give detailed feedback and helpful suggestions, before the drafting process begins.

It is very important that students do not begin to draft until they have a honed and focussed key question based on an agreed synoptic strand which can be fully explored in the 1500 words available.

Discussion of the:

(i)   Balance between the three texts

(ii) Degree of secondary research

(iii) Linking devices to be used

(iv) Quality of linguistic/literary analysis

before students begin to draft is also important given that once again, teacher input is limited to general comments thereafter. As with the AS unit, the use of exemplar materials will support the teaching of these aspects of the course.

2.   Keeping integrated analysis at the heart of the coursework

One of the teaching advantages of the A2 coursework is that students have already acquired understanding of integrated analysis and have grasped (although they may have forgotten over the summer break) the fundamentals of word classes and syntax. The style of analysis required will therefore be familiar to students.

To make sure all students are up to date and have the required skills, it is a useful September activity to ask each student to pick a short extract (perhaps a page) from their chosen text and analyse the effects achieved by the writer. This can be set as a homework and peer assessed in groups with students providing copies of their extracts. The 'best' ones can then be saved on Moodle as exemplars. It is useful then to collect in all the attempts as it provides a list of the areas of confusion. A series of short starter activities can then be created where the 'grey areas' are re-taught. At the end of this starter unit, the initial activity can be repeated, either as homework or if it is more useful to have the same text for later teaching, the same extract, perhaps from a well-known text can be used and given as a test in class.

3.   Assessment

Again, peer and self-assessment will be the main method by which students are focussed on the objectives.

Prior to the draft, the submission of a plan, which shows in brief how the three texts will be linked, can be useful.

As part of a lesson students, working in pairs, present their essay plan to each other. Using the assessment criteria students then offer suggestions on how the higher bands could be reached.

A similar technique can be used as students work through their essay drafts. Judicious selection of 'pairs', perhaps because their main text is the same one, will lead to really productive assessment of particular points in their essays. It is useful to change pairs once a draft is written as fresh eyes will see different points. If you have trained A2 mentors who have been working with AS students, their contribution here will be invaluable; they can monitor pairs, or work with groups of four to give input before the essay draft comes in to the teacher.

Once your feedback has been given (again a one-to-one session while the rest of the class works on Task 2 ensures students fully understand the feedback) students can continue to peer mark each other's work up to the final draft. Again, students who have been acting as mentors to AS students are particularly useful here, both in supporting students who have issues with A01 and with ensuring the essay is truly synoptic.

TASK TWO – THE CREATIVE UNIT AND COMMENTARY

1.   Teaching the creative unit

The freedom given to produce a creative piece in any predominantly discourse-based genre is enormous. Students can really work to their strengths as a result. Relationships between Task 1 and Task 2 can be tangential so for example a student studying 'Howl' and writing about Ginsberg as an example of a prophet, created a Radio 2 'Thought for Today'; another student whose main text was 'The Life of Pi' and theme was survival wrote the script for a voice-over for a BBC 2 wild-life programme. Genre choices overall have included a stand-up comedy routine, dramatic monologues, extracts from soap-operas, scripts for TV adverts and political speeches.

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The key to success with A04 is the authenticity of the genre and voice. We have found it useful to have students define their audience, purpose and genre at the top of the piece; that makes it far easier to assess if the piece is demonstrating expertise in its chosen field.

Therefore, as with Task 2 at AS, style models are the students' best friend. Reading the piece to a peer pair who has the style model will immediately reveal if the piece is 'excellent' and 'effective' for its chosen audience or purpose, or merely 'good' or 'competent'.

In terms of teaching, it is helpful to pick genres which you believe your students could succeed with and teach the conventions through style models. For example, we have taught speeches, monologues, sports commentary and TV reportage using style models. Students can then choose one of the taught genres or use the same methods to teach themselves something else. The most able will often deliver a genre with a 'twist' through the use of satire or parody for example.

As the students are drafting, it is important that they are aware of how their insights from integrated study are being used. A checklist can be prepared at the time of drafting which becomes the structure of the commentary. Peer pairs can also read drafts and point out literary, rhetorical, discourse or linguistic features which have been put to good effect, for example to create characterisation or humour.

Group sharing of Task 2 pieces is also very useful as they can be asked to be the target audience to whom the piece is aimed and therefore can offer detailed feedback about where amendments would improve the quality.

Drafts are taken in by the teacher once the peer assessment process has taken place, and again the one-to – one oral feedback process is given.

Once the feedback has been acted on, a self-assessment peer assessment activity takes place as it does at AS to allow a final edit.

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