

## The Lionheart English Curriculum: A Five-year Trajectory

### Curriculum Ethos

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Our curriculum follows a five-year trajectory and is built upon the understanding that skills are domain specific. Evidence demonstrates that treating thinking skills as abstract from content is unhelpful, leading to students thinking, speaking and writing superficially. It is for this reason that the fundamentals of our curriculum are underpinned by the acquisition of a broad and secure knowledge base. It is also for this reason that our curriculum enables students to begin KS4 having studied two full novels; three full plays (including a Shakespeare tragedy and comedy); the works of canonical, and influential contemporary poets; classical Greek and Anglo-Saxon epic narratives, and at least six complete short stories by canonical 19<sup>th</sup> century authors. Through our text choices at KS3 level, we aim to strike a balance between recognising the value of studying canonical texts and writers – and all the cultural capital that comes with this – and lesser-known, forthcoming texts and writers, which proportionately stress that we don't wish to place a hierarchy of value on white, westernised, literature. Our curriculum, in this respect, is not only broad, but inclusive. We believe that the diverse literary knowledge and experience that students are exposed to through our curriculum, arms them with the skills and references they require to become instinctive, scholarly and confident writers and readers.

The final two years of our curricular continuum build upon the foundational work done at KS3-level, ensuring that prior knowledge and the tangible connections that exist between key stages are explicitly identified and talked through with students. The core principles that underpin our knowledge-rich curriculum at KS3 are largely transferrable to KS4, however, at this stage in our students' educational journey, their learning becomes largely specification-bound. Because of this, we choose set exam texts that we feel speak to our student cohorts and address gaps in their understanding of the wider world. That is, through our decision to teach *A Christmas Carol*, or *An Inspector Calls* we're choosing to teach our students a pertinent and timeless lesson about the inequalities that frame humanity, and through our study of *Macbeth* our aim is to illuminate how Shakespeare's works tap into universal human longings for love, or justice, empathy and compassion. In this sense, we sustain our pedagogical focus on teaching students to truly *learn*, and not just how to pass their exams – although we of course recognise that this is important. Likewise, through our holistically designed, skills-based approach to English Language teaching, we endeavour to read, write about and discuss texts – both fiction and non-fiction – that plug obvious gaps in cultural awareness.

In short, our curriculum is underpinned by the following five principles:

1. *A rich, ambitious and coherent design to cater for holistic development and academic success:* we strive to create a learning culture characterised by thinking hard and 'desirable difficulties' (Bjork, 2011).
2. *Blended mastery and interleaved approaches to facilitate metacognition:* our curricular model is designed to instil memorability and transferability. Teaching is conceptualised over time, with regular opportunities to revisit prior content and for guided and independent practice (EEF, 2018).
3. *Reciprocal Reading and our Lionheart Writing Strategy as frameworks:* To provide students with structured approaches to reading and writing, supporting the development of strategic and knowledgeable readers, writers and thinkers.
4. *Schemes of Learning have explicit vocabulary instruction at their core;* we endeavour to make vocabulary acquisition an integral part of lessons in order to reduce vocabulary deficits (Quigley, 2018).
5. *Carefully sequenced and tightly assessed learning 'tapestry':* with a focus on knowledge being ongoing, encouraging students to always be 'focused, not finished' (Webb, 2020).

An overview of the KS3 curriculum looks like this:

<b>Year 7: Heroes and Villains/Myths and Legends</b>			
Text	The Ruby in the Smoke	Collection of epic poetry and classical narratives	A Midsummer Night's Dream
Key retainable knowledge	What/How/Why and an analytical vocabulary	Heroic/epic traditions and idiomatic cultural references	Shakespearian Comedy and dramatic method
Core written assessment	Evaluative essay on characterisation	Analysing then writing and delivering a heroic speech	Extract to whole play analytical essay
<b>Year 8: Social and Political Protest Writing</b>			
Text	19 <sup>th</sup> Century Short Stories	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time(play)	Social and Political protest Poetry
Key retainable knowledge	19 <sup>th</sup> Century genres, style and context	Modern drama, dramatic method and didactic/political traditions	Poetic devices and genres and Canonical poets
Core written assessment	Mimicking of 19 <sup>th</sup> century style narrative writing	Thematic analytical essay	Comparative essay on 2 poems (Blake and Angelou)
<b>Year 9: Aspects of Narrative and Literary Genres</b>			
Text	Djinn Patrol	Romeo and Juliet	War Poetry Collection
Key retainable knowledge	Narrative methods and theory	Shakespearian tragedy and dramatic method	Poetic devices, war poetry as a genre, WW1 and WW2 context
Core written assessment	Extract to wider play analytical essay under exam conditions	Article 'How the modern world is a Shakespearian tragedy.'	Comparative analysis of two anthology poems.