

What is English Language A Level? How is it different to GCSE?

A Level English Language is all about **how** and **why** we use the language we do.

We ask ourselves big questions about language use and use theories and our own ideas to try and answer them. Like these! →

We also look at texts and we analyse the choices the writers make. This is a bit similar to GCSE but we will look at a much wider range of texts in more depth.

Where do words come from?

Why do people have accents?

Do men and women speak differently? If so, why is that?

How do people view different accents and why?

How do children learn to read and write?

Does a person's ethnicity or sexuality affect the language they use?

Why do Americans and British people speak slightly different types of English?

How much has language changed since the invention of social media?

What we cover in A Level English Language

Exam Paper 1	Exam Paper 2	NEA (Coursework)
Language Levels Textual analysis Meanings and representation Pragmatics Grammar Child Language	Language and: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Accent and Dialect- Gender- Sexuality- Ethnicity- Occupation- Social Groups- Power - Language change	Original Writing and commentary Language Investigation

Your final grade is based on two exams (2hr30 each) and two pieces of coursework.

Your exams make up 80% of your final grade and the coursework is worth 20%

Paper 1: Text analysis

Example Paper 1 text:



STOP STARING AT ME
LIKE I'M SOME
PIECE OF MEAT.

What technique is this an example of?

Why this picture?

Why this background?

Why have they written 'Are you Mac enough'?

You can look but you can't touch. Ok. You can touch. But can you handle me? Check out my dimensions. Two all-beef patties and juicy all over. ARE YOU MAC ENOUGH?



How are McDonalds presenting this burger?

Who do you think this text is aimed at?

Why do you think they made these choices?

Paper 2: Language varieties

Example Paper 2 Topics

My daughter sounds uneducated because she says 'like' so much



A mother is worried that her daughter sounds stupid and uneducated because she uses the word 'like' all the time. [Mariella Frostrup](#) says it's just the world she lives in

■ If you have a dilemma, send a brief

email to mariella.frostrup@observer.co.uk

Mariella Frostrup: 'Our children's generation is seemingly happier to zoom in on their

What's wrong with dropping your accent to get on in life?

Updating your diction to match your aspirations is a useful means of social mobility



MELANIE MCDONAGH

5 October 2020 • 6:00pm

Family: can't understand your teenager's slang? That's the whole point

Lorraine Candy | Sunday December 01 2019, 12:01am, The Sunday Times



The rise of the 'sexy baby voice': Why we change our voices when speaking to certain people



Caroline Allen
Contributor

Yahoo Style UK 29 February 2020

COINED
**HOW FRIENDLY GAMER SLANG
MORPHED INTO THE MOST SARCASTIC
INSULT ON THE INTERNET**

GG EZ.



NEA coursework options

Investigations:

10%

Hypothesis:

Over time, the Disney princesses will use less powerless language features.

Presidential speeches have become more informal over time.

Journalists use different language to describe black football players to white football players

People of a younger generation find racial swearing more offensive than the older generation

How they tested it:

Watch 6 Disney films from the last 50 years and tallied powerless language features e.g. apologising, being interrupted

Analysed presidential speeches over time and looked for informal language choices e.g. address terms like 'guys'

Analysed different articles about footballers from a range of newspapers and looked at how they described their playing e.g. more intelligence vs physicality

Gave people questionnaires and got them to judge which words they found most offensive.

Original Writing:

10%

Novel opening

Short story

Travel Writing

A film/music/game review

A biography

A monologue

An opinion article

It's your choice!

The most important thing is that you pick something that you are interested in.

Frequently asked questions

- **What grade do I need to get at GCSE?**

You will need a 5 in GCSE English Language

- **How different is it different to GCSE?**

Very! Some of the skills are similar (analysing language) but the rest of the course is very different.

- **What careers will it be useful for?**

English Language is very useful for people who would like to pursue careers in advertising, marketing, teaching, publishing or journalism. It can also lead to careers in healthcare, such as speech and language therapy.

- **Is there a lot of creative writing involved?**

There is some creative writing involved in the course but you pick the format of writing you do. For example, you can pick to write a story or an article.

- **What subjects does it go well with?**

English Language goes really well with sociology, history, psychology and English Literature.



What our students say about the course

“Studying English Language has expanded our vocabulary and given us a wider appreciation of the language. It has made us realise how complex the language is and has developed our cultural understanding of the world. It has also helped with other subjects as it develops your writing and analytical skills.” Chloe, Rebecca, Freya, Sophie and Harry, Y12.

“It’s a very versatile subject as it helps with the writing elements of other subjects and it helps you understand the world of language. It has changed the way we perceive media.” Poppy and Tom, Y12.

“The teachers find interesting and enjoyable ways to help us learn the new concepts and topics.” Caitlin, Y12.

“We enjoy English as we get to debate and argue about both language and current affairs. It has changes the way we perceive language and it is really interesting to learn about the intricacies of our language” Cori, Isobel and Lucy, Y13.

“As someone who has continued to study English Language at The University of Nottingham for my degree, I know there is no limit to how fascinating the subject can be. Having coursework that makes up for 20% of the grade is fantastic as you can research something you find interesting and build on your personal strengths. You’re also able to have discussions and lively debates as everyone interprets language differently. It also has the best teachers that’ll make the subject so enjoyable! So if you do decide to choose it as one of your A levels, appreciate and value your time doing it as, for me, it was a highlight of my time at Meadowhead.” Izzy, ex-Meadowhead student.



What you can do to prepare for the A Level

Research some history of words! <https://www.etymonline.com/>

Listen to these podcasts about language:

- <https://www.theillusionist.org/>
- <https://vocalfriespod.com/>
- <https://www.fluentlanguage.co.uk/podcast-blog>

- There are also many interesting articles about language in the Mind Your Language section of The Guardian which you can find here: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language>

- You could also order any of the excellent books written about Language including:
 - How Language works – David Crystal
 - Because internet – Gretchen McCulloch
 - Eats shoots and leaves – Lynn Truss