**A Level English Literature**

**Overview**

English Literature is really a study of human nature, as written about by those writers who have been able to most eloquently sum up the human condition. We study a range of literature that spans over 600 years: from Chaucer, writing n the 1390s, to Atwood, writing in 2005. What always surprises English Literature students, is the way that it reveals that, really, human nature hasn’t changed. Whether now or in the 14th Century, human beings are still motivated by the same things: love, hate, selfishness, compassion, ambition, vanity, self-preservation and lust, to name just a few, English Literature deals with them all. What, of course, has changed is the social world that we move in and this is an important part of the course – studying the context in which Chaucer wrote, allows you to understand more fully his ideas. As a result, English Literature goes particularly well with other subjects that study human beings in their social and/or creative worlds so it is very well supported by History, Politics, Sociology, Film Studies, Media, Art, Music, etc.

**The course involves reading, discussing, writing and, where possible, watching, Literary texts. It is 80% exam and 20% coursework. The units are as follows:**

Unit 1 – Drama and Poetry pre-1900 – includes a play by Shakespeare, a play by Webster (on of Shakespeare’s late contemporaries) and one of The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer

Unit 2 – Comparative and Contextual Study – American Literature 1880-1940, includes a novel by Edith Wharton and a novel by F Scott Fitzgerald along with some wider reading.

Unit 3 – Literature post-1900 – This is the coursework element which includes A play by Alan Bennett (2004), A collection of Poetry by Carol Ann Duffy (1999) and a novel by Margaret Atwood (2005)

**Whilst there will be some specific ‘bridging work’ set on the school website before the end of term, developing an understanding of the following prior to this would be useful:**

Because context is such a big part of understanding literature, we’d really like you to try to get and idea of what life was like at the following times. One of the best ways to absorb this is by watching films set at that time and, in some cases, reading literature from the period:

* The late Medieval period in England and across Europe – we suggest you do this largely by watching films (see ‘Wider Reading’ list)
* The Renaissance period in England – again, films and podcasts and radio shows you can download (see ‘Wider Reading’ list)
* The birth of America and American Literature in the early 20th Century (see wider reading list)

**List what you have read, watched and listened to and make some notes about the things that interest you in a portfolio that can be incorporated into your subject folder if/once you decide to commence this course.**