

FAQs:

Literature:

- **Will I be allowed to take my set texts into the Literature exam?**

Yes – but only if your copies of the set texts are *clean* – i.e. without annotations.

- **Does it matter if I take an edition that is different to that used by the rest of the class into an exam?**

No, it doesn't. However, it might take you a little longer to find the passage used in the passage-based section of the exam. (You can ask an invigilator for help with this, if necessary.)

- **How do you revise for English?**

1. Start early: if you work hard during lessons and for homework assignments you should have a clear understanding of what is required in the exam.
2. Know your texts well: in particular, re-read the novel and play you have been studying.
3. Try making notes or finding quotations for different themes, motifs and characters in the text you are studying. For example, you might make a list of important quotations for Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, or make a list of ideas about the themes of money and class in *The Great Gatsby*.
4. Practice makes perfect! Write practice essays and ensure your teacher gets to read them.

- **Why is my friend in another class studying a different book?**

Your teacher will have selected a text from the list set by the exam board that he or she feels is most appropriate to your class. There are a number of options.

- **Although I haven't studied it with my teacher, my favourite book is on the syllabus. I really want to write about it! Should I just go ahead and answer a question on it in the exam?**

No – this would be a really bad idea. Stick with Plan A: you have been preparing for months to write about one text in particular. Why spoil your chances by changing tack now?

- **What should I have studied by the time I take the Literature exam?**

You should have studied: a) a *prose* text (usually a novel); b) some *poetry*; c) a *play* (usually by William Shakespeare). There is also an *unseen* question. Here you have a choice of writing about a prose passage or some poetry.

- **What kind of questions are there in the exam?**

Unseen question aside (this is a different paper, in fact) there are three kinds of question you might encounter:

- a) A question which generally covers the scope of the whole novel/prose work you are studying. This might focus on a character or a theme.
- b) A passage-based question, which wants you to look closely at the language being used in the passage concerned.
- c) An empathetic question – for example, writing in the style of a character from the play you are studying.

*Remember: you **must** answer at least one passage-based question. These will be marked with an asterisk (*).*

*However, you can't do **all** the questions marked with an asterisk. You must also do at least one "essay" question.*

- **How long should I spend on each question?**

45 minutes. (The exam lasts for two and a quarter hours in total.) If you exceed this by more than five minutes or so, it would be better if you stopped writing and moved on. There is no point in producing a fantastic essay on one text if you have no time to write properly about the remaining two.

FAQs - The Unseen Paper:

- **How do I prepare for the unseen paper?**

Essentially, by making sure you have practised. Your teacher will have set this kind of task, either at home or during lessons. Make sure you complete these tasks to the best of your ability.

- **What kind of questions will I get in the unseen paper?**

There will be a choice of two texts to write a response about: poetry or prose. You can choose *either* – you are not more likely to do well in one than another.

- **What kind of thing do they want me to write about?**

They are looking for your response to the question set: provided what you say answers the question and focuses on details *from the text* you should be fine. Don't worry, necessarily, about using technical terms like caesura or enjambment – it is your ability to read, understand and appreciate literature that is important.

- **Which exam board am I studying?**

You are studying the IGCSE syllabus set by *Cambridge International Examinations* (CIE). This is true for both the Language and Literature papers.

Frequently asked questions – language:

- **How many papers are there?**

There are two papers – Paper 2 and Paper 3. (Don't worry about Paper 1.)

- **I'd like to know more about Paper 2. What's in the exam?**

I'm glad you asked. The exam paper contains:

- a) Two passages of approximately 600–700 words each, linked by a common theme.
- b) Three questions on these. The *first* is a piece of extended writing in response to the first passage. The *second* is a study of the language used in the first passage. The *third* is a summary of information contained in *both* passages.

- **Great! So, how about Paper 3.**

No problem! Paper 3 contains:

- a) A piece of directed writing, based on one or more short passages printed in the question paper. You will need to use and develop the given information in another form, e.g. a letter, a report, a speech, or a dialogue.
- b) A composition. This could be argumentative/discursive, descriptive or narrative. *Make sure you know what the difference is between these styles of writing.*