

# **How Can I Support my Child in English?**

## **A Parents' Guide**

## **Why is English important?**

- A good English GCSE is required for most level 3 courses
- Most universities and employers demand GCSE English, often at grade B (6) and above
- It is much easier to sit the exams now rather than later in life
- English teaches you vital life skills that give you confidence and an ability to communicate in a wide range of situations

## **Getting the basics right**

- ✓ Develop a regular routine for completing homework. Make sure there is a place free from distractions to work in, preferably with a desk/table to write on
- ✓ Ensure your child is checking Show My Homework daily (there is an smartphone app that can be downloaded)
- ✓ Encourage them to attend Period 7 (after school on a Tuesday)
- ✓ If they have been absent for any reason, check that they have spoken to the teacher to find out what they missed and how to catch up
- ✓ Never say “I was never any good at English” as this will lead them to believe there is no point trying to improve

## **What skills are tested in the exams?**

- Reading 20<sup>th</sup> century literary fiction
- Reading non-fiction from the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Analysing and comparing poetry (including unseen poems)
- Writing to describe/narrate
- Writing to argue/persuade

## **How to revise**

Some people say “You can’t revise for English” but this is not true! Turn over for lots of practical ideas...

1. Re-read the texts! Most of these can be downloaded for free onto a tablet or smartphone using an app such as Amazon Kindle. There are also copies on Show My Homework.
  - a. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde
  - b. An Inspector Calls
  - c. Macbeth
  - d. The AQA Conflict poetry anthology– [www.aqa.org.uk/English-e-library](http://www.aqa.org.uk/English-e-library)
2. If you choose to buy your own copy of a book, encourage students to use highlighters or post-its to remember important sections/quotations.
3. Subscribe to English teachers' YouTube channels (e.g. Mr Bruff, Stacey Reay) and watch two videos each week.
4. Read around the topic, e.g. by finding articles about texts online, researching authors using Wikipedia, browsing YouTube.
5. Read for pleasure – choosing challenging texts from a range of genres.
6. Read a wide range of non-fiction, e.g. by downloading the Guardian or Huffington Post app.
7. Look at your child's exercise book, paying particular attention to targets set (Ts) and ensure that they are following up on the teacher's feedback in purple pen.
8. Be aware of your child's areas for development with SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar). Test them on the spellings they keep getting wrong.
9. Encourage your child to redraft/rewrite work following the advice given by the teacher and hand it again for remarking.
10. Complete practice papers – time your child to see how long it takes to answer each question. Next time try to beat the time.
11. Use websites to explore key topics, e.g. BBC Bitesize, Sparknotes and Schmoop
12. Learn quotations by putting posters/post-it notes up around the house. (turn over for even more ideas on how to memorise quotes)

### **Talking Together**

- Get your child to tell you new words they have learned in English and explain what they mean
- Get them to tell you what the book/play is about and what they find interesting about it. Ask them questions about it.
- Talk about the meanings of unfamiliar words you come across in books, films and TV programmes
- Read their creative writing pieces together and tell them what you like about them

## Top Tips: How to memorise quotes for the closed book exams.

### 1. Don't try to remember too many at once

Pick out five quotes at a time to work on. Trying to memorise too many all at once is going to addle your brain. Choose the quotes you can use again and again for different questions – the most important ones.

### 3. Make an index card for each quote

My very favourite revision method for memorising facts and information is using index cards

Once you've got them, write your quote on one side. On the other side write the key words from your quote.

When you first start trying to memorise the quote look at the side with the full quote on and read it out loud to yourself several times. Then, flip the card over and use the key words to prompt your memory. Finally, hide the card and see what you can remember.

You can carry your index cards around with you for the quotes you're currently focusing on and if you get a quiet moment e.g. on the school bus or while you're waiting for a lesson to start you can quickly go over them.

### 2. Choose quotes for the main characters and themes

For each text you're studying, start by learning the quotes that you seem to use most often.

### 4. Analyse each quote

You're memorising these quotes to support your explanations so you've got to know what they mean. Write the quote in the middle of a piece of paper and create a mind map where you're brainstorming everything you can think of about the quote.

*For example:*

- What it says about the character
- How it demonstrates or expands on a theme in the text
- The use of language in the quote
- The rhythm, meter, rhyme or other plays with language such as assonance, alliteration or sibilance and what this says about the affect the writer was trying to achieve

Understanding is the very first step to remembering so this is important stuff – and it will also help you to access higher marks in your exam.

### 5. Draw cartoons or sketches to help you remember

If you're a visual learner drawing pictures, cartoons or dingbats to help you remember will probably help.

### 6. Read, cover, say and write

I did a lot of my learning by reading out loud, covering up the information and then saying it as I wrote it out again and again and again.

### 7. Make sticky notes and stick them where you'll see them

Many people swear by this. You can stick them above your desk, on the back of the loo door, around the mirror where you do your hair and make-up or on the fridge door. Read over them whenever you see them.

I just want to issue a word of warning with this revision technique though.... Often when things are on the walls in your environment you stop noticing them. Are there pictures on the wall in your bedroom that you haven't looked at properly in ages? Just beware of becoming immune to your sticky notes because they've blended into your environment.

### 8. Visualisation

For each of the key words in a quote think of a visual image that ties groups of these words together.

### 9. Start early

Start to memorise quotes as early as possible so you've got time to learn five quotes per week using the little and often method. Whatever you do, don't leave it until the day before the exam to start learning them!

### 10. Rinse and repeat

When you've learnt a quote keep going back to it to remind yourself of it. So, don't learn a quote this week and then forget about it until the week of the exam. Instead, make sure you read it through 2-3 times per week to keep it fresh in your memory.

