



*A brief introduction to
WJEC GCSE English
and English Literature
coursework
requirements*

October 2006

General notes on GCSE English and English Literature folders

- At least one piece in a single entry or dual entry folder must be supervised.
- At least one piece in a single entry or dual entry folder must be handwritten.
- Normally the minimum requirement for a combined English and English Literature folder is six pieces, four in the English folder and an additional two pieces for the Literature folder.

English Folder Requirements

Reading: The study of a play by Shakespeare

Reading: The study of poetry from different cultures and traditions

Writing 1: Either to explore, imagine entertain
Or to inform, explain, describe

Writing 2: Either to argue, persuade, advise
Or to analyse, review, comment.

Notes

- Be aware of the criteria for assessment (in the Specifications) when setting tasks so that the students have access to the higher grades. Some tasks make it difficult for students to reach them.
- When choosing texts, it is helpful to be aware of the students' ability. Sometimes centres perhaps unwisely choose texts that are too simple for able candidates or texts which are too difficult for less able candidates.
- Tasks with the word 'how' in are likely to encourage the students to write about the way language is used. This gives access to the assessment criteria for the higher grades.
- One piece of Reading/literature work may be assessed orally, but there needs to be a full justification for the assessment.

Reading: Shakespeare.

- Most centres approach this task through a close study of a particular scene from a play or through a more general task relating to the whole play.

Examples:

- *How does Shakespeare create tension in Act 3 scene 1 of 'Romeo and Juliet'?*
- *How is the character of Macbeth revealed in the first act of the play?*
- *Is Shylock a victim or a villain? Refer to the language of the play in your answer.*

- Work on Shakespeare may also fill the Pre-1914 Drama section of the Literature folder.

Reading: Different Cultures Poetry

- If the student is not attempting the English Literature examination, he/she only needs to work on one poem.
- If the student is attempting a comparison, only one poem needs to originate from a different culture.
- Since this piece is likely to double up as the Post-1914 poetry entry in the Literature folder, it is important that a comparative aspect is built into the task. This needs to be explicit. For example: 'Compare and contrast *Still I Rise* (Angelou) with *Cousin Kate* (Rossetti)'. A task like 'How do Heaney (*Blackberry Picking*) and Plath (*Blackberrying*) portray their experiences?' does not **require** the student to compare. It is best to avoid this type of task.
- It helps students to gain higher grades if they look at the two poems separately before trying to compare.
- Poems need to be thematically linked. The fact that they are both Different Cultures poems is not a sufficient link. See below for examples.
- For more able students, it is important to choose poems of sufficient substance so that they can show their ability and reach the higher grade assessment criteria.

Centres are at liberty to choose any poems which fit the Different Cultures requirement but this list of possible comparisons may be helpful.

Tempo (Lauris Edmond)/*Catrin* (Gillian Clarke)

**Coming Home* (Curtis D. Bennett)/*The Man He Killed* (Hardy)

**The River Merchant's Wife* Anon. (Translated from the Chinese by Ezra Pound)/*A Woman to her Lover* (Christina Walsh)

The Label Emigrant (Bertolt Brecht)/*Refugee Blues* (WH Auden)

For my lover returning to his wife (Anne Sexton)/*Adultery* (Carol Ann Duffy) (NB This poem contains strong language.)

Storm on the Island (Seamus Heaney)/*Wind* (Ted Hughes) or *Patrolling Barnegat* (Whitman)

For my daughter, Yansan Yashoda (John Agard)/*Prayer before Birth* (Louis MacNeice)

The Other Woman (Liz Lochhead)/*Manwatching* (Georgia Garrett)

Act of Union (Heaney)/*Morning Song* (Plath)

Early Purges (Heaney)/*Mort aux Chats* (Porter)

**I wouldn't thank you for a Valentine* (Lochhead)/*Sonnet 130* (Shakespeare)

**Still I Rise* (Maya Angelou)/*Cousin Kate* (Rossetti)

The Surfer (Judith Wright)/*Storm on the Island* (Heaney)

**Do not ask of me, My Love* (Faiz)/ *If thou must love me (Sonnet XIV)* (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Easter 1916 (Yeats)/ *Requiem for the Croppies* (Heaney)

Blackberry Picking (Heaney)/*Stealing Peas* (Gillian Clarke)

Do Not Go Gentle into that Goodnight (Thomas)/*Mid-Term Break* (Heaney)

The asterisked combinations are also suitable for the pre-1914 section of the literature folder.

Most of these poems are available on the Internet.

Writing 1

- Most centres allow students a free choice of task in this section of the folder. This is probably a better approach than requiring all the candidates to attempt the same title.
- The writing does not need to be over-long. Generally three or four sides of handwriting are sufficient. However, if the students are writing descriptions, it is important that they write enough to fulfil the requirement for the writing to be 'sustained' if they wish to access the higher grades.

Writing 2

- The most important aspects of the criteria for assessment for this part of the folder are audience, content and tone/register. Students should write an original piece for a specific audience with a clear format (letter, report, review, article etc.). If a leaflet format is chosen it is important that there is sufficient writing to assess.
- The writing in this part of the folder should **not** be an analysis of another piece of informative/persuasive writing (e.g. an advertisement).
- Film reviews for a specified audience are acceptable but care needs to be taken that the student does not take all or part from the Internet.
- If the task set requires 'research', great care needs to be taken that the students do not rely too heavily upon it since if the moderator sees sudden changes in style or vocabulary suspicions of plagiarism will arise.
- It is probably best to avoid the 'big' issues (abortion, vivisection, drug abuse, capital punishment etc.) since, in the past, work on these topics has tended to rely too heavily on material from external sources.
- Local issues are probably safer for the students to work on since they will not have so much access to source material which may tempt them to plagiarise.

English Literature folder requirements

To fulfil the English Literature requirements, student must study examples of Pre- and Post-1914 prose, poetry and drama across the coursework folder and the examination. The set texts list is published in the English Literature Specifications.

A typical folder could be constructed as follows:

Pre-1914 poetry: *Compare and contrast 'The Seduction' (McAuley) and 'To His Coy Mistress' (Marvell).*

Post-1914 Poetry: *Compare and contrast 'Still I Rise' (Angelou) and 'Cousin Kate' (Rossetti).*

Notes:

- Only one of the poems chosen needs to fit the period requirement. In the Pre-1914 Poetry task here, it is the Marvell poem: in the Post-1914 Poetry section, it is the Angelou poem.

- The Post-1914 poetry essay has come from the Different Cultures section of the English folder and this assignment is dual entered.
- Centres are free to choose the poems the students study. Here are some suggestions for the Pre-1914 section of the folder:

Strange Meeting (Owen)/ *The Man he Killed* (Hardy)
To His Coy Mistress (Marvell)/ *Valentine* (Duffy) or *To His Mistress Going to Bed* (Donne) or *A Woman to her Lover* (Christina Walsh)
First Love (Clare) or *The Ruined Maid* (Hardy)/ *The Seduction* (McAuley)
My Last Duchess (Browning)/ *Salome* (Duffy)
The Burial of an Infant (Vaughan)/ *The Dying Child* (Clare)
I wake and feel the fell of dark (Hopkins)/ *Thou hast made me and shall thy work decay?* (Donne)
Cherry Ripe (Campion)/ *Sonnet 106* (Shakespeare)
London (Blake)/ *Preludes* (TS Eliot) or *Upon Westminster Bridge* (Wordsworth)
Uphill (Christina Rossetti)/ *The Road Not Taken* (Frost)
Sonnet 130 (Shakespeare)/ *Ann Hathaway* (Duffy)
My Heart is Like a Withered Nut (Caroline Norton)/ *Cousin Kate* (Rossetti)

Most of these poems are available on the Internet.

Prose: *How does Dickens create a sense of tension in the first chapter of 'Great Expectations'?* (Pre-1914 prose). Examination text: *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck) (Post 1914 prose)

Drama: *How is the character of Macbeth revealed in the first act of the play?* This piece is the Shakespeare task from the English folder and has been dual entered. Examination text: *A View from the Bridge* (Miller).

If you need any further advice, do not hesitate to contact Hugh Lester, the English Subject Officer at WJEC (details below).

Stuart H Sage, Principal Moderator GCSE English and English Literature



Welsh Joint Education Committee
 245 Western Avenue
 Cardiff
 CF5 2YX

<http://www.wjec.co.uk>

Subject Clerk Mike Williams 029 2026 5129 mike.williams@wjec.co.uk
 Subject Officer Hugh Lester 029 2026 5023 hugh.lester@wjec.co.uk

To subscribe to the email bulletin, please send a blank email to hugh.lester@wjec.co.uk with this subject line: subscribecgse