

# A2 Unit 3: Reading for Meaning

## Planning a route through the unit

Unit 3 leads to the final A2 examination. This is synoptic, bringing together the skills and learning of the whole course:

- ◆ students are required to develop and apply knowledge and understanding of literature **through time** (from Chaucer to the present day)
- ◆ texts studied need to represent all **genres**, and writers of both **genders**
- ◆ candidates need to be prepared to apply skills of **analysis, interpretation, comparison, connection** and **evaluation** to unseen texts linked by theme
- ◆ as well as good **close reading** skills, the unit requires **wide reading** and the ability to recognize and relate the contexts of literature to unprepared texts.

In the examination, students read closely and analyse four unprepared texts and extracts from all genres and a range of different times, linked by theme. They will compare the subject matter and style of the extracts. They will also relate them to their wider reading, drawing comparisons between the ways different writers at different times approach the chosen theme. They are also expected to show some awareness of the ways different readers interpret texts.

## Options and issues

The theme set for Unit 3 for the time being is '**Love Through the Ages**'. The theme is not confined to romantic love, but may include love in any form, such as parental or familial love, or loving friendship.

Candidates must read the equivalent of **at least three complete texts**, but will also need to read more widely on the theme. Reading should include:

- ◆ the three genres of prose, poetry and drama
- ◆ literature by both men and women
- ◆ literature through time (from Chaucer to the present day)
- ◆ some non-fiction texts.

In order to succeed, students will need:

- ◆ a good overview of how love has been presented in literature from the age of Chaucer to the present
- ◆ some understanding of how attitudes and beliefs about love have differed over time, and also in different places and cultures, as reflected in literature
- ◆ to be introduced to a good range of texts or extracts that represent different literary periods and different aspects of love relationships

- ◆ to develop an understanding of how literature has changed over time and to be able to recognize the features, conventions and language that are typical of different literary periods
- ◆ practice at organizing written answers analysing unprepared material *and* drawing on a wide range of other material. They will need to recognize broad parallels between texts, but it is vital that they are also able to make connections and comparisons at the level of detailed analysis of language.

While students are not required to study any full-length texts, only the *equivalent* of three, it is probably advisable *at least* to build the course around study of a **Shakespeare play** in which love is a prominent theme – which can also provide the starting point for the Unit 4 Extended Essay – and **one full-length novel**, preferably one which opens up several aspects of the theme of love or explores the different stages of relationships.

As with the AS course, the two A2 units are likely to be taught in parallel. Although the Extended Essay for Unit 4 can be on any topic or theme which can be linked to the Shakespeare play(s) studied, students and teachers may prefer to maintain the focus on the Unit 3 theme, in the interests of focusing their work and making the most economical use of the time available. (For more on this, see the Planning section for Unit 4.)