

English Language and Linguistics A Level

Preparation work: Pre-course Reading, Research and Tasks

We are delighted that you have chosen to study English Language A level when you join us in the autumn. We hope you have enough time and space to complete the following tasks before you start the course.

Specification :

A good place to start to look at the A level specification and familiarise yourself with what you will be studying on the course:

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/english-language-h070-h470-from-2015>

Task 1:

A very short anthology of texts – read and note. A crucial skill within the course is the ability to read and understand some quite challenging texts when you have not seen them before. To get you started with this, attached to this document you will find texts taken from an anthology of 40 texts from various sources that you will be given at the start of the course.

Please do the following:

- a. Read the texts carefully, looking up any words you don't know
- b. Summarise what the text is saying
- c. Note down what the *agenda* of the text is.
 - i. Who is it aimed at? What might be the political ideology of the reader? (Centre-left? Centre-right?) What kind of age profile?
 - ii. What is it trying to do? Is it a personal reflection that a reader might then empathise with? Is trying to influence the reader to do something?
 - iii. What is the genre of the text? Obituary? Review? Weekly column? Memoir? Does it perhaps blend more than one genre?
 - iv. What is the **register* of the text? It is usually mixed, with some formal and some informal elements more typical of speech

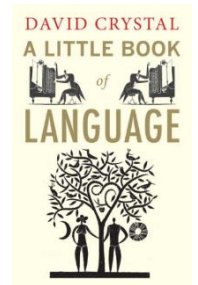
Task 2:

Build your own anthology. Taking the texts we have offered as a model, **find 3 texts** of your own. You should:-

- a. Find **3 texts** that are a minimum of 500 words long
- b. Choose ones with a challenging register: there should be some words that you perhaps don't recognise first time through. The main 'broadsheet newspapers, The Times, the Financial Times, The i, The Guardian, The Telegraph are all pitched at this level. Magazines like Vogue, Empire, GQ, The Spectator, The New Statesman are all similarly at that level. Books are good too! Why not go to a bookshop or your local library and see what catches your eye...
- c. Get a range of different genres: guide, travel writing, obituary, newspaper column, review, diary, autobiography, online, paper based, excerpts from books.
- d. They should reflect your own interests: sport, music, fashion and so on
- e. Take a photo or scan of the text – we'll need copies that we can see and read when we start lessons
- f. Make a page of notes for each one like you have done for the ones we provided.

Task 3:

Some preparatory reading. We have lots of evidence that students who read are more likely to succeed in this subject. Aim to read something from each of the columns on the list on the next page. Please also get hold of *A Little Book of Language* by David Crystal. It makes an excellent introduction to language study, from the acquisition of language through to debates about the evolving mode of electronic communication. There 38 Chapters. Please write about 25 words to summarise each chapter. There is space for this later in this handout. Here's an example of what you might write.



Chapter 1: *Establishes that babbling is random and universal, followed by rhythm and intonation, followed by a child's first word at around aged one.*

Bring the personal anthology and the notes on your wider reading to the first lesson for a discussion about language in our society.



Radio/Podcasts	Media	Fiction/non-fiction	About Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Radio 4 output particularly current affairs programmes (<i>The Today Programme</i>, PM), programmes covering ideas such as <i>The Moral Maze</i> Anything to do with the English Language, (Word of Mouth, Fry's English Delight) <i>Key Words of Our Time</i> – BBC <i>The Allusionist</i> – A Language Podcast from Helen Zaltzman 'Code Switching' – Lucrece Grehoua BBC Radio 4 <i>Lexicon Valley</i> – Professor John McWhorter <i>A Way With Words</i> – with Martha Barnette and Grant Barrett <i>Something Rhymes with Purple</i> – with Suzie Dent and Giles Brandreth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read a broadsheet newspaper three times a week (Guardian, Independent, Times, Telegraph) Magazines like The Spectator, The New Statesman or any magazine relating to an area of interest (sport, fashion, music etc) Navara Media – left-leaning online media organisation novaramedia.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> horror historical romance science fiction fantasy literary (see department reading list) try the stories/novels in the bottom row – all fascinating for the way they use language Travel books (eg '<i>Notes from a Small Island</i>' – Bill Bryson) Biographies of footballers, politicians, actors etc Popular history books Popular science books Political writing (e.g. Owen Jones, George Orwell) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Txting, The Gr8 Db8</i> – David Crystal <i>Because Internet</i> – by Gretchen McCulloch <i>A Very Short Introduction to English Language</i> – Simon Horobin <i>A Little Book of Language</i> – David Crystal <i>The Mother Tongue</i> – Bill Bryson <i>You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation</i> – Deborah Tannen <i>Eats Shoots and Leaves</i> – Lynne Truss <i>The Language Instinct</i> - Steven Pinker <i>Stories of English</i> – David Crystal <i>How Language Works</i> – David Crystal Deborah Cameron's superb Language: A Feminist Guide blog

A very short anthology of texts!

These 5 texts are taken from our own anthology of texts that you will get in the first week of the A level. We hope that they will whet your appetite to get the whole book and read on! They will give you a taste of the kind of text that you need to be able to read and analyse later in the course

1. Extract from first chapter of *Who Are We?: How identity Politics Took Over the World*, by Gary Younge. This chapter is called 'Me, Myself and I'

i. 1968–9: Hitchin

Like everybody, I am a product of my time and place. The time was turbulent. In the period between when I was conceived and when I was born, Martin Luther King was assassinated; US president Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act; Enoch Powell delivered his 'Rivers of Blood' speech; French students took over the streets and almost took down the government; Robert Kennedy was assassinated; the Kremlin sent troops into Prague; Rupert Murdoch bought the most popular Sunday newspaper in Britain, the *News of the World*; police clashed with anti-war protesters at the Democratic party convention in Chicago; 150 women protested at the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City; the Marylebone Cricket Club cancelled its tour to South Africa because the apartheid regime refused to accept Basil D'Oliveira, a Cape Coloured, as part of the team; France exploded its first H-bomb; the Mexican government massacred more than a hundred students in Mexico City; the Royal Ulster Constabulary batoned civil rights protesters in Derry seeking better housing and ran amok on the city's Bogside; Tommy Smith and John Carlos delivered a Black Power salute from the Olympic podium in Mexico City; students and Black Power activists rioted in Jamaica over the banning of lecturer Walter Rodney from the island; Swaziland and Equatorial Guinea declared their independence; Richard Nixon was elected president; Britain passed a new race relations act; and Yale University announced it would accept women.

The place was sedate. I was born in Hitchin, thirty-five miles north

of London, and raised in nearby Stevenage. More of a satellite town than a suburb, it was created primarily to house Londoners bombed out of their slums during the war. A new town in an old country. A working-class town in a class-ridden society. A black family in a white town. Nominally Christian and effectively godless. An immigrant family in a town where almost no one was native.

My parents were teenage sweethearts who arrived separately in London from Barbados in the early sixties, at the tail end of post-war migration. Britain sent for labour, but people arrived. They came to work and ended up living. My parents already had two boys by the time they got to Stevenage, which, if not a great place to raise a family, was then, at the very least, not a bad one. And for my immediate family, these were good times. Probably the best. Two parents, both working, two boys aged three and four (I was the third) and a three-bedroomed council house with a garden front and back.

‘You do not choose to be a son or a daughter,’ argues philosopher and cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah in *The Ethics of Identity*, ‘a Serb or a Bosnian; a Korean or an Mbuti . . . In all sorts of ways, our identities are neither wholly scripted for us nor wholly scripted by us.’

Many struggle with the idea that they belong to groups they never asked to join. Their reticence, in this regard, is both understandable and unsustainable. For some, these evasions are easier than for others. But whether we claim them selectively or not, our identities have a habit of sticking with us. I was named after Gary Sobers – a Barbadian and one of the most famous cricketers of his era. Only history could make sense of how I came to be born in that place, in that time, with that name. Only I can make sense of the rest.

Notes on text 1 (look briefly at the model on the next page if you would like to)

- Read the texts carefully, looking up any words you don't know
- Summarise what the text is saying
- Note down what the *agenda* of the text is.
 - Who is it aimed at? What might be the political ideology of the reader? (Centre-left? Centre-right?) What kind of age profile?
 - What is it trying to do? Is it a personal reflection that a reader might then empathise with? Is trying to influence the reader to do something?
 - What is the genre of the text? Obituary? Review? Weekly column? Memoir? Does it perhaps blend more than one genre?
 - What is the register of the text? It is usually mixed, with some formal and some informal elements more typical of speech
- Pull out 3 or 4 quotations from each text for some further analysis, looking particularly at aspects of register.

Notes on text 1

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU MIGHT TAKE NOTES ON THESE TEXTS

i/ Aimed at educated readers

- Centre left? → "new race relations act"

"announced it would accept women"

↳ progressive agenda.

- expecting knowledge of culture, geography, history.
"civil rights... apartheid..."

ii/ Personal reflection "I am a product..."

"I was born"

→ but also to start a conversation with a progressive slant

(NB writer is British - parents from Barbados, no concept of acceptance of difference is underpinning the text)

"Sent for labour, but people arrived."

iii/ Genre: a form of autobiography
+ sociological text

Gary Younge
is a professor of sociology
and former journalist.

iv/ Mixed register

→ opening sentence has a conversational opening

"like everybody..."

→ idiomatic "sticking with us"

→ some more challenging lexical choices "turbulent"
"satellite"

Summary: Younge is opening a book about identities by placing his own story in front of readers - showing how the notion of identity is affected by contexts of history, culture, geography etc.

2. This text is a column from the Sunday Times, written by Madd Rudd, who writes each with for the paper.

THE MATT RUDD COLUMN

There's a war going on — and I'm moaning about my sausage roll

It's time to put life's minor hassles in perspective

[Matt Rudd](#)

Sunday March 13 2022, 12.01am, The Sunday Times

On Wednesdays I treat myself to a sausage roll from Greggs because I like to live the high life. I try to time my arrival at the counter with the new tray of sausage rolls coming out. It's quite an exciting challenge and one at which I've become something of an expert. If there are four sausage rolls left on the old tray and the chef is looking into the oven, I know I've got to loiter in the drinks section. I let five people go ahead of me on the basis that 80 per cent of a morning Greggs queue is in it for the sausage and 20 per cent is vegan. Then the oven beeps, I arrive at the counter all apparently accidental and get the first hot sausage roll of the new batch.

But this Wednesday something unexpected happened. With absolutely no warning the man in front of me ordered a steak bake. No one orders a steak bake at 9.20am. Except this guy — this statistical outlier, this back-to-front, cornflakes-for-dinner maniac — did. And before I could role-play second thoughts on my drink choice, I was at the counter saying "Sausage roll, please" and there it was, the last of the old batch, warm and forlorn, not hot like the ones the sausage-roll chef was only then just getting out of the oven.

You can imagine how I felt.

Except everything's changed now, hasn't it? The minor disappointments of everyday life seem like exactly what they've always been — minor disappointments. Things that are actually not worth getting disappointed about. Not when the population of a European capital is sitting huddled and terrified in subways. Not when our screens are filled each day with the indiscriminate shelling of men, women, children, maternity hospitals and nuclear power stations.

[some text omitted]

It shouldn't take scenes of war for us to put life's trivialities into perspective, in the same way it shouldn't have taken scenes of famine in the 1980s to make us appreciate the food on our table. (I still associate broccoli with Mum's angry "What about the starving children in Africa?"). But it is one way to deal with the feeling of sheer helplessness that comes from turning on the television at the moment. Wellness gurus (annoying) talk a lot about gratitude (very annoying), but perhaps a more effective approach right now is to be less annoyed by the lesser things. Don't get wound up by that new study that says a glass of wine a day keeps the type 2 diabetes away, even though you know full well that another new study will say the opposite next week. Don't be angry about cyclists or drivers or those bastards on e-scooters. Or slow walkers. Or fast walkers. Or the stop-to-check-your-phone-with-no-warning walkers.

The train's late but there is one. The wi-fi's slow but there is some. You were out when we pretended to deliver your package. Arise, Sir Gavin. Leaf blowers. The steak bake guy. Oh God. It's not working.

Take a deep breath. Keep calm. Carry on.

[@mattruidd](#)

Notes on Text 2

3. This is a review of the Netflix series 'Pangolin: Kulu's Journey' a documentary about a pangolin

Television [+ Add to myFT](#)

Pangolin: Kulu's Journey review – stirring extinction warning from the maker of My Octopus Teacher

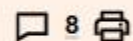
Oscar-winner Pippa Ehrlich spotlights a species that has existed for 80mn years but could be gone in 20



Kulu, pictured, is the subject of a new documentary

Dan Einav

Published APR 22 2025



An indefinably strange and incredibly endearing creature resembling a hybrid of anteater, pine cone and Pokémon, the pangolin has been discreetly scuttling around Earth in one form or another for some 80mn years. But having coexisted with dinosaurs and endured aeons of change, this reclusive, scaly mammal is now on the brink of being wiped out by humans. Poached and harvested for traditional Chinese medicine, it faces extinction in the next two decades if illegal trade continues at current levels.

A stirring new Netflix documentary from the maker of *My Octopus Teacher* spotlights both the plight of the pangolin and the admirable efforts of small organisations and individuals to protect this “unicorn-type creature” from traffickers in South Africa. The film begins with the rescue of a young animal in a sting operation and goes on to follow the traumatised pup’s year-long rehabilitation under the attentive supervision of local volunteer Gareth Thomas. Like director Pippa Ehrlich’s previous feature, which became an unlikely streaming hit and Oscar-winner, *Pangolin: Kulu’s Journey* is as much an emotional study of human nature and interspecies communication as a high-res study of the natural world.

“There’s just something about pangolins,” observes Thomas early on. Watching Kulu go about his business in the safety of a wildlife facility — foraging for ants; scurrying around with his “arms” anxiously clasped in front of him — you start to get what he means. For all the animal’s distinctive features — the armoured, coiling body and impossibly flexible tongue — what really stands out is its quiet, vulnerable innocence. A scene capturing Kulu’s trembling shock as he’s electrocuted by a fence will test even the most stoic viewer.

While the film unashamedly pulls the heartstrings, there’s nothing affected about Thomas’s doting “parenting” or his separation anxiety as Kulu’s return to the wild looms. We hear how the work has given him a sense of purpose, and how his intense attachment to Kulu has helped him overcome the grief that he felt after the sudden death of his closest friends. The poignant irony is that where pangolins are being killed for remedies, caring for one appears to have been a healing experience for his handler.

The story of man and creature growing together is uplifting and yet, at times, both wearingly earnest and overly sentimental. But there is, towards the end, a sobering reminder of the way humans abuse the environment and a call for more accountability and awareness. As rehabilitation expert Nicci Wright puts it: “If such a special creature like a pangolin is lost, it symbolises the way we treat everything.”

★★★★☆

On Netflix now

Notes on Text 3

4. Caitlin Moran: ode to the NHS

‘In the waiting room, we all play a game called “Being brave for each other”’

Caitlin Moran

May 7 2016, 12:01am, The Times



We will all come here, in the end. An NHS waiting room. Even if you are rich, or lucky, not everyone you know is – and so you will be here, one day. This waiting room. It was here before you were born, and will be here after you die. You don’t just wait in the waiting room. The waiting room waits for you.

Patient or carer – which one of you is more scared? You’re playing a game called “Being brave for each other”, which requires sitting in this room and talking to each other in a slightly too bright manner: as if the words have grainy crystals in them, rather than their usual mammalian flow. The words are fractionally too fast, fractionally too shiny.

(Text omitted)

What are you being brave about? When you walked through the main doors – past the smokers in dressing gowns: the living embodiment of “Ah, f*** it, it’s too late now” – it was mental health to the left, broken bodies to the right. A misfiring thought; an arrhythmic heart; a dark cluster of trouble on an x-ray, or in your dreams – they’re all the same, really. In the vastness of the universe – in the limitless, still-exploding wastes of space – your whole life now centres on something almost invisibly tiny: a hairline fracture. Something the size of a grain of rice, in the wrong place. A few drops too few of serotonin. A few drops too many of cortisol. A tiny thing is wrong, and it has brought you to your knees. It threatens your very you.

And so now this huge building – these corridors and lifts and nurses and specialists; these machines and cafés and porters and machines – will try to wrap its gigantichness around you, and mend this tiny, wrong thing.

(Text omitted)

In the waiting room, you cannot work out if we are in an age of miracles or still cavemen, fighting plagues with a stick. You've walked past the machinery – the facilities, in every bed bay, for keeping a human alive. The sockets on the wall for resuscitation kits; the drips and the dialysis and the ventilators. Chunky plastic and metal – the same materials we make toy trucks out of, or picnic sets. That is the best we have yet invented to replace the miracle of honeycomb bone, pulsing vein, logical mind and airy lung. These chunky, brutal things.

But, yet, they keep you alive – bring you back from the dead. Deliver you back to your daughters, and your husbands, and your parents – when, in another decade, they would have buried you or lost you to an asylum.

(Text omitted)

And these people, in this place – the doctors, the nurses, the consultants, the shrinks – that is what they have all signed up to do. The astonishing people who work the long dawns and the exploding nights. They are trying to put as many people as they can on the trains, out of this waiting room. That is their vocation. They are conductors on the soul train. They are desperate to watch you leave.

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Notes on Text 4

5. Beginner's guide to wild camping in the UK – is it legal and what rules do you have to follow?

Fancy getting off the beaten track? One of the joys of wild camping is the chance to sleep under the stars in beautiful rural locations.

[Matt Havercroft](#)

Published: May 21, 2025 at 10:51 am



Wild camping is a peaceful activity which offers the chance to sleep immersed in nature. After a long day of walking on a **long-distance trail**, falling asleep to the sound of a **hooting owl** in the distance or **snuffling badger** is a life-affirming experience and the perfect tonic to the stresses of modern life.

The rules around wild camping in the UK are strict in order to protect the natural environment and wildlife from damage. But how do you know if it's legal to camp, and what should you bring? Whether it's leaving no trace to ensuring you've packed that vital piece of kit, our essential wild camping guide explains how to get started, where you can legally camp in the UK, best camping kit to take and explains how to camp in the wilderness safely.

What is wild camping?

Essentially, wild camping involves setting up camp outside of a [campsite](#) or caravan park and sleeping in your [tent in the wilderness](#). You might be doing a multi-day hike and camp in a national park (checking first it is legal to do so) or fancy a micro adventure sleeping in nature. Tempting though the solitude of the wilderness may be, wild camping can be daunting for first-timers, which is why our handy guide explains how to wild camp legally and safely in the UK.

Is wild camping legal?

The general rule for wild camping is to check whether you can legally camp - or get permission and it is vital to leave no trace. Before heading to the wilderness to wild camp, it's important to check the rules in your region. The majority of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, campers have no legal rights so check before you camp or get the landowner's permission. Some sites in Scotland, including [Loch Lomond](#) now require campers to get a permit so do your research before you go.

Wild camping England

Most land in England is privately owned by landowners. While wild camping isn't banned, the only way to wild camp legally in England is by seeking permission from the landowner.

The only place that wild camping is legally permitted in England is in [Dartmoor National Park](#). However, this was threatened after a lengthy legal battle that was brought on by some of its landowners, Alexander and Diana Darwall, after they challenged the right to wild camp on their 4,000-acre estate on Stall Moor near Cornwood. A Supreme Court ruling in May 2025 upheld the right to wild camp.

Wild camping in Wales

The rules surrounding wild camping in Wales is much the same as in England – permission must be gained from the landowner. [Snowdonia National Park](#) owns only a small amount of land within the national park so [it recommends](#) speaking to the landowner for permission to camp – or find a campsite within the park.

Most of the land within the [Brecon Beacons National Park](#) is privately owned so again permission needs to be gained before pitching your tent. It can be tricky to determine who owns the land, but much is owned by farms so contacting the local farmer can be a good place to start.

Mount Tryfan above Llyn Ogwen in Snowdonia National Park in Wales/Credit: Getty Images

Wild camping in Scotland

Wild camping is legal in most of Scotland, thanks to the [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#). Under this law, wild campers are allowed to pitch up on most unenclosed land. On exception is Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park which is now subject to [wild camping byelaws](#) following overuse and damage to the natural environment. This means that camping is only permitted within campsites or with a camping permit.

Wild camping tips

- **Respect the landowners**
- **Arrive late and leave early**
- **The wild camping code: Leave no trace**

This is the crucial rule of wild camping and ideally you will create minimum impact on your desired area so it still remains natural and wild. Better still, you should leave the site so no one can tell you've even been there.

Litter — this goes without saying, but ensure you collect all your rubbish and take it with you. Walk the site slowly before leaving to check that nothing is missed. Leave the site as you found it - don't leave holes, fire damage, litter, and take care not to damage vegetation. This includes toilet duties: if you need to go to the toilet, dig out a 6-inch-deep turf away from paths or water. When you have finished, cover it back over.

Fire — If you are allowed to light a fire, ensure you do so correctly and leave no trace that you were ever there. Many sites don't allow fires so again do your research.

- **Stay just the one night - and then move on**
- **Keep group numbers small**
- **Source clean water**

Notes on Text 5

Notes on 'A Little Book of Language'

Chapter 1: Establishes that babbling is random and universal, followed by rhythm and intonation, followed by a child's first word at around aged one.

Chapter 2:

Progression Opportunities

Why choose English Language A Level:

A Level English courses are taken by students doing a wide variety of other subjects, in Arts, Humanities and Sciences. They go on to many different courses and careers. English is often a component in degree courses in Humanities as well as being a very popular choice as a single-subject degree. The skills that you learn are a useful starting point for careers in the arts and the media, law and business, and in other professions where creativity, critical awareness and the ability to communicate clearly are needed.

We hope you enjoy completing these tasks and look forward to you joining the course.