



ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Are you thinking about studying English Language at A Level? The activities in this 4 week preparation for Bede will give you a taste of what might be in store for you as a student of this subject and you might be surprised quite how different it is to the English you've been doing so far at school.

Some of the activities ask you to step back and think about the nature of language and communication (in all its forms – not just writing), while others encourage you to try out some different ways of approaching your learning – whether that's reading, writing, discussing or listening to others. The activities will prepare you for the kinds of work you would do on an English Language A Level course and will hopefully be interesting in their own right.

Week 1: Language Profile

Spend around three hours on this task. Answer the questions in as much detail as you can.

One of the most interesting aspects of studying language is that you learn more about your own language use, so let's make this first task all about you...

Create a 'language profile' of yourself by answering the following questions and then writing them up as a set of bullet points that highlight what you think are the most interesting and important aspects of the language you use:

1. What's your earliest language memory? Can you remember a nursery rhyme, song or picture book from when you were very little?
2. Have your family or extended family kept any records – video, audio, family memories – of any of your earliest words?
3. Have you kept any old school books from when you were learning to read and write?
4. Where were you born and where in the UK, or the wider world, are your family from? Go back a few generations if you like and think about any other languages that your family members might speak, or other places your family members might have lived. For example, my parents moved to Huddersfield from India so my parents have an Indian accent when they speak. I was brought up in Huddersfield and my accent used to be broad Yorkshire but since I have lived in Middlesbrough for over 30 years my accent is a blend of Yorkshire and Teesside.
5. Are there any words or expressions only you or your family use, which others don't really understand?
6. Do you or your friends at school use language in any ways that you notice as being different from other people around you? These could be other people in your year, your teachers, your family, whoever.
7. Do you listen to or watch anyone on TV, online or in films or music videos who uses language in a way that interests or annoys you?
8. Do you ever look at or hear someone else using language in a way that you find is totally new or strange to you?
9. Have your teachers or family ever talked to you about the way you speak?

One of the most useful resources for language on this course is you. Language is made up of so much more than the words we see printed on a page, so when you are thinking about language, come back to these ideas here to keep the range wide. We are often told there is a right way and a wrong way to use language, but the more you study about language, the more you'll realise that it's more complicated and interesting than that.

And you'll also start to build up a bigger picture of the different influences on your own language identity as this course goes on – all the factors that influence who you are linguistically and how you can choose to behave with language in different situations.

Week 2 Task: Do We Need New Words?

Spend around 2-3 hours on this task.

The English language is always generating new words. New words can be created out of nothing, these are called neologisms, or be formed by using other words – or parts of words – together in new combinations (called compounds and blends). Sometimes initials of words in a phrase might be used (acronyms and initialisms) and you might also see parts of words being added to the front or end of another word to give it a new form (prefixes and suffixes). Most A level English Language courses look at how and why new words are formed, but there is also debate about whether we need new words and when (or whether) they should appear in dictionaries.

1. Look at the list of some of the new words (in the table) that have appeared (or suddenly become much more popular) in English over the last few years.
2. Have you heard of these words before? Have you used any of them? Tick the relevant columns for each word.
3. Choose two words from the list that you think are an important addition to the language. Try to come up with a sentence or two explaining why they are so important.
4. Then choose two words from the list that you think are pointless and insignificant. What's the problem with these words and why do you think they shouldn't be included? Again, write a sentence or two explaining your thinking.
5. Are there any other new words – or new meanings for older words – that you have heard about? Perhaps you could make a note of new and interesting uses of words over the next few months.
6. If you are interested in looking at the history of new words and slang terms that have appeared in the language, read the article by Jonathon Green one of the world's most respected slang lexicographers (i.e. people who compile dictionaries of slang): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27405988>

Word	Definition	Have heard/seen this word being used	Have used this word myself
Floss	A dance in which people twist their hips in one direction while swinging their arms in the opposite direction with the fists closed. Popularised by the game Fortnite.		
VAR	Video Assistant Referee. A system used in football to assist refereeing decisions.		
Gaslight	To manipulate or trick someone by pretending that they cannot trust what they see or hear until they doubt their own sanity.		
Twerking	A way of dancing that involves bending forward and shaking or thrusting your buttocks in a rhythmic motion.		
Dadbod	A term used to describe the typically flabby and unsculpted male physique that most dads have.		
Cancel culture	A way of describing the movement to 'cancel' - to publicly disapprove of and then attempt to ignore - celebrities or organisations because of their perceived immoral or unpopular actions.		
Climate strike	A protest in which people leave work, school or college when they should be attending to take part in a protest about climate change.		
Influencer	A person who uses social media to promote a particular way of life or commercial products to their online followers.		

Week 2 Task continued

Word	Definition	Have heard/seen this word being used	Have used this word myself
Nonbinary	A word describing a sexual identity that does not conform to binary categories of male and female.		
Hamsterkaufing	Stockpiling food like a hamster storing food in its cheeks (from German)		
WFH	Working From Home		
Mansplaining	A patronising way of explaining something (by a man to a woman).		

Week 3 Task: Forensic Linguists & Language Fingerprints

Spend around three hours on this task.

As you learn more about language use, you'll start to see that everybody has their own unique language style. Lots of things influence this – where we're from, how old we are, the type of work we do and our interests, our family backgrounds and our own individual personalities – but we all have what's called an idiolect (an individual language style). It's not quite the same as a fingerprint, but there are some similarities. And while detectives can use fingerprints to track down individuals, forensic linguists can also use this idea of individual language style to identify people, or aspects of a person's background.

This activity puts you in the role of a language detective trying to solve a crime. The police need your help to work out who might have sent an abusive social media message from an anonymous account to a local politician. They have three suspects in custody and your job is to offer a view on which one you think is most likely to have sent the message, based on possible language clues.

1. Read Exhibit 1, the abusive message that the police are investigating. Is there anything that stands out in this message as being potentially interesting about how language is being used?
2. Social media messages about the same issue which were used to identify three suspects. Read through these in turn, again making a note of anything that strikes you as interesting about how language is being used.
3. Based on this small amount of data, have you got any suggestions about who might have sent the abusive message? Write a short police report explaining your thoughts. Try to pin your thinking down to specific bits of language evidence in the data.

You can email me your thoughts and ideas and I will share my suggestions with you.

This is a **very** simplified version of the kind of analysis forensic linguists sometimes do.

If you want to find out more about the real work forensic linguists do in solving crimes, listen to Tim Grant discuss aspects of forensic linguistics here <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips>

Exhibit 1: the abusive message

Hope your really proud of yourself for what you done but you gotta no that one day your gonna get payback!!! We have had enough of politicians like you not listening to us, you should of listened!!! Watch your back

Suspect 1's social media message

I don't like what's been happening in this area since the new housing development started. This used to be a nice place to live!!! I'm so disappointed in are local representatives for not sticking up for us!!!

Week 3 Task continued

Suspect 2's social media message

When are local councillors gonna realise that they should of been standing up for us and not for they're mates in the big building firms, these people are gonna make a fortune from this

Suspect 3's social media message

Your joking! Are they seriously going to build 200 new houses on the fields up by the hospital?! That is crazy. There's not enough facilities for the rest of us at the moment. Madness!!!

Week 4 Task: Key Events in Language History

Spend around three-four hours on this task.

One of the most interesting parts of any A level English Language course is exploring how the language we use today came to be. Even now, the language is changing all the time and is used by people in the UK (and beyond) in many varied ways. From its earliest origins in the 5th Century, English has gone through many changes and reached many historic milestones.

1. This activity asks you to create a timeline of key events in the history of English. You might not know some of the dates for these events – and that doesn't matter at this stage – but you will still be able to start sequencing some of the main developments in the language.
2. You can do this activity either by writing out the events in the order you think they happened or by printing the sheet and cutting out the tiles to place in a sequence.
3. If you're writing the dates, put them in a sequence on a sheet of paper, with the oldest ones on the left and the most recent on the right.
4. If you're printing and cutting them out, shuffle them around and try to place them in the order that you think they occurred, with the oldest events on the left and the most recent on the right. Add tiles to your timeline one by one, thinking about where to place each one, before settling on your final timeline.
5. Once you have decided on the order of events, you can check your answers at the end of this booklet.
6. How accurate was your timeline? Do any of these dates surprise you?
7. Why do you think some of these dates are so significant to the history of the language? Choose three key events from the timeline and try to write a sentence or two about their significance.
8. If you want to find out more about some of the key events in the history of the English language, have a look at the link to the British Library timeline. English Language and Literature Timeline: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/evolvingenglish/accessvers/index.html>

First TV broadcast in the world	First spelling guide in UK
First printing press in the UK	First English settlement in America
First telephone call	First wood-cased pencil invented
First Bible translation in English	First newspaper printed in UK
First dictionary published in UK	Passing of Education Act that led to compulsory schooling up to age of 15
First BBC radio broadcast	Norman invasion of Britain
First Hollywood film studio built	First email sent
First SMS (text) message sent	Establishment of first university in the UK





Reading list: extension activities

If you enjoyed completing the activities and want to keep going, begin to read or dip into the texts suggested below.

READ NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Take the same story and see how it is presented in the broadsheet papers such as:
The Guardian newspaper (most of the content is free online)
The Times
The Independent

And the tabloid papers such as:

The Daily Mail
The Daily Mirror
The Sun

READ OTHER NON-FICTIONAL TEXTS SUCH AS:

Reviews of films, computer games, etc.
Obituaries
Recipes
Travel Writing
Magazines (any but you could look at a variety such as women's, sports, hobbies)

Invest in a revision guide that you can use at home, as well as in class: Revision Express AS & A Level English Language - ISBN: 978-1408206539

Viewing suggestions: extension activities

If you prefer to watch/listen to programmes then you may enjoy and learn from the sites below:

A Level English Language, Mr Bruff: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLcvX_sddV0&list=PLqGFsWf-PcBJyO6jD2a6e9UKuq2FA1iS

Are You Using the Wrong Terminology? Mr Salles Teaches English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBjEJgw6Cho>

TED Talk: The Origins and Evolution of Language by Michael Corballis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd5cklw6d6Q>

TED Talk: What your speaking style, like, says about you by Vera Regan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAGgKE82034>