

Curriculum Rationale and Overview (Scheme level)



Subject: English

Year group: Year 8

	Autumn	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
National Curriculum context	<i>Year 8 starts with Charles Dickens's 'Great Expectations'. Rather than shielding economically disadvantaged or low-literacy students from complex, archaic text, this curriculum puts it front and centre. Autumn 1 consolidates and extends the Year 7 analytical framework, while Autumn 2 turns this reading into writing, challenging students to actively mimic the dense, clause-heavy, highly descriptive Dickensian voice to build their own characters.</i> <i>In 'Fictional Villains', students analyse the dark psychology of literature, learning about archetypes, stereotypes, and physiognomy. In Spring 2, they flip this concept with Non-Fictional Heroes, moving away from literary analysis to transactional writing. This unit targets the mechanics of writing—ensuring comma splices are eradicated and high-level punctuation (colons, semi-colons) is deployed with absolute control.</i> <i>The Summer term covers voice, performance, and socio-political awareness. 'Post-Colonial Voices' introduces poetry that rebels against the rigid, classical European structures studied in Year 7. Students will evaluate how modern poets use phonetic spelling and free verse as tools of empowerment.</i> <i>The year culminates in Philip Pullman's adaptation of 'Frankenstein'. This unit synthesises the gothic themes of 'Great Expectations', the character psychology of the Villains unit, and the vocal confidence of the Heroes unit. Students will focus on physical stagecraft and vocal modulation, finishing Year 8 as articulate, confident public communicators.</i>				

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Scheme of Learning Title:	Great Expectations	Villains - Fictional	Heroes - Non-fictional	Poetry - Post-Colonial Voices	Frankenstein (play)
Content <i>What will students know?</i>	Victorian Social Context: The rigid class system of 19th-century England, the realities of poverty, the industrialisation of London, the Victorian prison system (hulks), and the concept of a 'gentleman'. Dickensian Character Archetypes: The function of caricatures and archetypes (e.g., the terrifying but vulnerable convict Magwitch; the vengeful Miss Havisham; the innocent, corrupted Pip). Stylistic Techniques: Advanced literary devices used by Dickens, such as extended metaphors, grotesque imagery, pathetic fallacy, and sensory imagery. The Bildungsroman Genre: The structural conventions of a 'coming-of-age' novel tracking a protagonist's psychological and moral growth.	Villain Archetypes in literature (e.g. the Machiavellian mastermind, the unhinged chaotic agent, the tragic/misunderstood antagonist, the societal parasite). The literary methods used to construct villainy, including physiognomy, externalisation of internal malice, and linguistic manipulation. The concept of tropes, stereotypes, and cultural biases that authors historically relied upon to immediately signal 'evil' to an audience. The explicit definitions of antagonist, foil, motivation, and subversion.	The structural conventions of high-end journalistic writing, specifically the feature article, biographical profile, and formal broadsheet. Structural writing frameworks, including advanced topic sentences (using fronted adverbials or subordinate clauses) and cohesive paragraphing. A specialised vocabulary bank tailored to virtuosic human behavior (e.g., <i>altruism, resilience, philanthropy, fortitude, visionary</i>). Explicit grammar constructions designed to inject authority into non-fiction, such as passive voice.	The broad definition of Colonialism and Post-Colonialism (specifically regarding the British Empire and its legacy). How poets use language to explore identity, displacement, and belonging. Key cultural and linguistic terms, such as Patriotism, Heritage, Culture, Creole, and Patois. Specific poetic devices used to challenge tradition, including phonetic spelling, free verse, and enjambment used to mimic natural human speech.	The core conventions of Gothic Drama. The plot, characters, and structural beats of Pullman's adaptation. Specific Dramatic Techniques and Stagecraft terms: <i>blocking, proxemics, gait, vocal inflection, tone, pacing, dramatic irony, soliloquy, and stage directions</i>. The role of a director in translating text from a page into a physical, visual performance.
<i>What will students understand?</i>	That Dickens used serialised fiction as a tool for social activism, aiming to expose the hypocrisy of a society that judged moral worth by financial status. That archaic 19th-century language is a barrier that can be overcome by analysing root words, context clues, and sentence syntax.	That villains are rarely just evil for the sake of it; they are deliberate constructs used by authors to expose a flaw in society. How historical context dictates what a society fears.	That a real-world 'hero' is a complex individual who often demonstrates extraordinary courage in the face of systemic opposition, differing from a fictional, flawless superhero. That transactional writing relies on mechanical precision to maintain	That standard English is not the only or 'correct' way to write poetry. That poetry can be deeply political, serving as a vehicle to challenge history books and voice the perspectives of marginalised groups.	That a script is not a finished literary piece; it is a blueprint for performance that relies on human movement, lighting, and sound to fully capture meaning. How proxemics and physical theatre can communicate a character's vulnerability or dominance.

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	How authors use setting (e.g., the decaying Satis House vs. the cold, misty marshes) to mirror a character's internal psychological state or moral decay. That mimicking a master writer's style (the Dickensian voice) requires deliberate precision in vocabulary choice and grammatical construction.	That a stereotype or trope can be actively subverted by a writer to challenge prejudices.	credibility; minor errors in SPaG detract from the weight of a serious real-world message. How a topic sentence acts as a mini-argument, ensuring that paragraphs are not just lists of facts, but structured, logical proofs of a central thesis. How punctuation choices (such as colons for emphasis or semi-colons to link complex ideas) create an elevated, authoritative voice.		That Pullman's adaptation highlights the tragic humanity of the Creature. That an effective spoken-word or dramatic performance requires rigorous technical control.
<i>What will students be able to do?</i>	Deconstruct archaic syntax and complex Tier 3 Victorian vocabulary to extract meanings. Construct rigorous analytical paragraphs, explicitly linking language choices to historical contexts. Adopt a Victorian prose voice, manipulating vocabulary and sentence lengths to create distinct, vivid characters. Edit and refine creative prose to replace modern idioms with authentic 19th-century stylistic choices.	Identify and deconstruct linguistic and structural signs of villainy. Track characterisation across a text to evaluate whether a character fits a traditional stereotype or subverts it. Formulate critical arguments, moving past basic plot summary to evaluate the author's psychological and ideological intent. Compare and contrast how two different authors use different linguistic methods to achieve a similar sense of threat.	Draft tightly controlled paragraphs. Deploy a range of punctuation marks with technical accuracy. Vary sentence structures deliberately to control the emotional pacing of a real-life narrative. Proofread and self-correct their writing layout, systematically hunting for comma splices, run-on sentences, and spelling slips before final submission.	Analyse how identity is constructed through non-traditional linguistic choices and structural forms. Deconstruct phonetic spelling and colloquial language to uncover deeper, celebratory meanings. Formulate analytical paragraphs under tight time constraints. Evaluate a poet's intent, explaining how a poem seeks to change the reader's view.	Interpret a script using stage directions to inform vocal delivery and physical movement. Manipulate proxemics and blocking to visually represent power dynamics. Deliver lines with varied tone, projection, and pitch. Collaborate constructively in small ensembles, taking on the roles of actors and directors to rehearse and refine a scene.

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How will they be formally assessed?	Autumn 1: Analytical Reading Students will complete a formal essay response to an extract from the novel (e.g., Pip's terrifying first encounter with Miss Havisham in <i>Satis House</i>). Focus: Applying the "What? How? Why?" framework. Students will analyse <i>how</i> Dickens employs linguistic devices and gothic conventions to present a character or atmosphere, and explain <i>why</i> this reflected Victorian societal anxieties. Autumn 2: Creative Writing - Character Craft Students will write a descriptive, character-focused narrative. Focus: Students will create an original character (or spin-off scene) heavily inspired by the grotesque or eccentric figures in the novel. The assessment scores their ability to intentionally mimic the Dickensian style—evaluating their use of pathetic fallacy, extended metaphors, varied sentence structures, and rich, precise Victorian-style vocabulary.	Analytical Reading Students will be presented with a substantial extract featuring a classic literary villain (e.g., the introduction of Bill Sikes in <i>Oliver Twist</i>). The Prompt: Analyse how the author uses language, structure, and characterisation to present the character as an archetypal villain.	Transactional Writing The Prompt: Write a biographical feature article for a broadsheet newspaper celebrating a real-life hero (either studied in class or a personal hero from their own life/community) who has overcome adversity to make a difference.	Analytical Reading Students will be given a studied poem (or a highly accessible unseen post-colonial poem) and a targeted question. The Prompt: Analyse how the poet uses language and structure to present their feelings about their identity/culture.	Spoken Word & Dramatic Performance In small groups (2–3 students), students will rehearse and perform a key dramatic scene from Pullman's <i>Frankenstein</i> (e.g., the iconic moment of animation, or the confrontation between Victor and the Creature on the mountains).
Blended Learning Opportunities (yr 7 & 8)	Students build "Character Mood Boards." They pin historical Victorian imagery alongside specific quotes from the text, helping low-literacy students visually anchor the abstract, archaic descriptions of Satis House or London. Students use text-to-speech and instant digital dictionaries on their Chromebooks to independently decode difficult vocabulary,	Students are given digital quote cards from various villains across history. In groups, they categorise them into visual digital webs mapping out which ones rely on physical stereotypes versus psychological manipulation.	Students use column layouts, drop caps, and image wrapping on Google Docs to format their writing exactly like an authentic newspaper. Teachers upload a completely unpunctuated block of text about a historical hero to students via Google	Students read poems alongside audio recordings of the poets themselves reciting their work. Students use Mote to record their own reflections on how hearing the accent	Before standing up to act, student groups use a digital grid template of a stage on their Chromebooks to map out their physical paths. Groups record their rehearsals using their Chromebook cameras. They upload the footage to a

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	building vocabulary autonomy without constant teacher intervention. Teachers provide digital "sentence combining" exercises. Students take short, simple modern sentences and manipulate them on-screen into complex, clause-heavy Dickensian sentences using coordination and subordination. Using Google Docs, the teacher live-projects a student's paragraph and edits it in real-time, showing the class exactly how to upgrade a "What? How? Why?" chain or inject more descriptive rigour.	Students use a collaborative document to act as "prosecutors" or "defense attorneys" for a villain like Shylock or Magwitch, compiling digital textual evidence chains to debate whether the character is a malicious archetype or a victim of their environment. Short, scaffolded digital reading tasks where students are given a paragraph of dense 19th-century text and use the digital highlight tools to isolate examples of <i>physiognomy</i> or <i>pathetic fallacy</i>, getting instant feedback on their analytical accuracy.	Classroom. Students compete on their Chromebooks to correct it. Using Google Forms or a shared sheet, students paste their partner's text and run it through a digital SPaG checklist.	changes the poem's meaning compared to reading it silently. Student groups use a shared Padlet to pin historical definitions, timelines of the British Empire, and images of the Windrush generation, creating a digital context bank. Students use the highlighting tools on Google Docs to visually separate <i>methods of conformity</i> from <i>methods of rebellion</i> within a poem, making structural choices instantly visible.	shared class thread where they review and critique their performance. Students use the comment feature on a digital copy of the script to drop audio notes (using Mote) detailing <i>how</i> a specific line should be delivered.
Literacy/Numeracy/Personal Development	High-intensity focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary (e.g., <i>ostentatious</i>, <i>melancholy</i>, <i>macabre</i>, <i>industrialisation</i>, <i>gentility</i>). Explicitly breaking down Dickens's long, multi-clause periodic sentences to understand how subject-verb agreement works in classical literature. Group reading of dialogue to master the cadence and tone of Victorian class registers. Calculating the disparity between Pip's allowance, Joe's blacksmith wages, and Miss Havisham's vast wealth to quantify class division.	Exploring how villains use language differently from heroes (e.g., hyperbole, flattery, and dramatic irony). Introducing sophisticated comparative vocabulary to write complex essays (e.g., <i>fundamentally</i>, <i>inherently</i>, <i>paradoxically</i>, <i>symptomatically</i>). Reading villainous soliloquies aloud to feel the rhythm of power, control, and internal malice.	Learning how to write an inspiring, respectful prose piece without relying on cliché adjectives like "nice" or "good." Explicit instruction on the difference between a colon and a semi-colon. Moving students away from relying on the teacher to spot typos. Successfully embedding numeric data, ages, percentages, and historical	Exploring and respecting dialects, Creole, and Patois. Teaching students how to use precise vocabulary when discussing power structures. A heavy emphasis on performance and vocal inflection, matching the oral storytelling traditions rooted in	Mastering the layout and reading mechanics of play scripts. Using specific Tier 3 terminology to describe character states during rehearsals. Learning to listen to vocal cues from scene partners and adjusting live performance timing dynamically in response.

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	Personal Development (SMSC) Demystifying the English literary canon so that disadvantaged students feel a sense of ownership over classical literature. Exploring Pip's moral decline as he becomes a gentleman and his eventual redemption. This prompts discussions on identity, gratitude, true worth vs. superficial wealth, and treating others with dignity regardless of social status.	Personal Development (SMSC) Critical evaluation of how historical literature used physical disabilities, foreign nationalities, or marginalised groups as shorthand for 'villainy', teaching students to spot and dismantle harmful media stereotypes today. Discussing <i>why</i> audiences are often fascinated by villains, and examining the psychological roots of empathy vs. psychopathy.	dates into a sentence without disrupting the grammatical flow of the prose. Personal Development (SMSC) Exposing economically disadvantaged students to real-world figures who shattered glass ceilings, fostering personal resilience and high aspirations for their own futures. Exploring what it means to be an active citizen. Discussing how students can be "everyday heroes" within their own local community or school environment.	many post-colonial cultures. Reading graphs and mapping the timelines of migration patterns. Personal Development (SMSC) This unit fosters mutual respect, celebrates dual identity, and opens up spaces for students to feel proud of their own linguistic or cultural roots. Critically evaluating the historical actions of the British Empire, helping students develop into mature, empathetic citizens who understand the complexities of modern British history.	Using performance space effectively by calculating angles of visibility. Managing the precise runtime of a scene. Personal Development (SMSC) Discussing the moral responsibilities of creation, scientific advancement, and playing God. Exploring the psychological impact of prejudice and abandonment on the Creature, fostering real-world empathy. Developing critical soft skills—negotiating creative differences, sharing the spotlight, and building collective accountability.
<i>Links to Prior learning</i>	From Year 7 Poetry Through the Ages: The confidence students built decoding early language forms in Year 7 is revisited, transitioning those skills from short poems to complex novel extracts. From Year 7 "The Curious Incident..." Unit: Connects to first-person narratives and unique character perspectives.	From Year 7 "The Tempest": Students will compare the bitter, complex villainy of Antonio or the initial 'monster' branding of Caliban to the prose villains in this unit. From Year 8 "Great Expectations": Students will apply their knowledge of	From Year 7 "The Giver" : This builds on the introductory transactional skills taught in Year 7. From Year 8 "Great Expectations": In the previous term, students mimicked the style of Victorian fiction. In this unit, they remove that	From Year 7 "Poetry Through the Ages": Students will contrast the rigid, classical forms studied in Year 7 with the free-verse, rebellious structures used by post-colonial poets. From Year 8 "Fictional Villains": While the	From Year 7 "The Tempest": Students step up from tracking classical iambic pentameter and Shakespearean comedy tropes to tackling modern gothic, complex stage directions, and physical stage craft.

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	From Year 7 "The Giver" (Dystopia): Links to the theme of an imperfect, oppressive society. Students will see that while <i>The Giver</i> is a fictional dystopia, Dickens' depiction of Victorian London highlights a historical reality that mirrored a real-world dystopia for the working class.	Victorian values, gothic tropes, and Dickensian caricatures (like Magwitch or Miss Havisham) to evaluate whether these characters are true villains or misunderstood outcasts. From Primary School (KS2): Elevates the simplistic, binary primary understanding of 'good vs. bad' fairytale characters into a mature, psychological investigation of complex, flawed human behaviour in literature.	embellishment to write in a journalistic style. From Primary School (KS2): Elevates basic primary school biography worksheets into a sophisticated, socio-politically aware piece of print journalism.	<i>Villains</i> unit looked at how mainstream literature often creates harmful stereotypes, this unit shows how marginalised writers actively smash those stereotypes to reclaim their own narratives. From Primary School (KS2): Progresses from reading culturally diverse poetry purely for surface-level enjoyment or performance toward analysing the politics and history behind the writing.	From Year 8 "Fictional Villains": Students apply their understanding of villain archetypes to analyse whether the Creature is a true antagonist. From Year 8 "Great Expectations": The dark, eerie atmospheres, themes of rejection, and psychological decay studied in Satis House with Miss Havisham provide the perfect aesthetic and conceptual foundation for the dark world of <i>Frankenstein</i>.
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