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Secondary school pupils and English Literature

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Thesis for the degree of M.Phil.

October 2019

Keele University

Abstract

This research is centred on the school subject of GCSE English Literature and the experiences of current secondary-school pupils following the recent changes to the discipline. It is an exploration of their views towards GCSE English Literature as taught and assessed at their school in 2015. Successive government policies have presented differing views towards the subject of English Literature and its role and purpose within secondary-school education. My interest is in the current experience of pupils within this curriculum area following the changes made by Michael Gove (the Secretary of State for Education from 2010 to 2014) and how this has impacted on the identity of the subject. This research investigated the debates surrounding GCSE English Literature in secondary education and contributes to such ongoing discussions by drawing on the voices of pupils. The methodological approach to this investigation into a contemporary phenomenon is a case study employing qualitative interpretivist methods. The research centred on one school in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Research took place in the spring of 2015 within the school environment through the distribution of questionnaires and small-scale group interviews. The findings are considered through a constructivist framework and indicate some contradictions with prior beliefs of what the discipline is said to offer pupils. Conclusions are drawn in relation to what we can learn about the subject from the experiences of pupils and the impact of Gove's changes to the taught curriculum. The voices of pupils are used widely throughout the findings chapters to illuminate the discussion and give a true sense of what these pupils really think about the subject as they experienced it. The data presents a clear insight into the views of pupils engaged in the learning of GCSE English Literature and is telling of how they perceive the subject in education today.

Acknowledgments

I thank the staff and pupils who kindly supported and participated in this study, without whom this research would not have been possible.

I also thank my supervisor Dr John Howlett at Keele University for his support, patience and good humour.

Finally, I wholeheartedly thank the two very best people in my life, my parents: Gillian Dutton and David Jonathan Dutton.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an outline to the background of this research, including my personal and professional research journey that has led me to this point and this research focus. It also offers the reader details of how the research process was identified including a reflection on my pilot study. The context within which this research developed and the evolution of the rationale behind it are also explained.

1.2 My personal and professional context

This research is centred on the pupil experience of GCSE English Literature within secondary education with the aim that this research can give insight into the views and perceptions of pupils and, by so doing, explore the current identity of the subject. It is an exploration of the views of pupils towards GCSE English Literature as it is taught at their school following the changes made to the curriculum by Michael Gove (secretary of State for Education from 2010 to 2014). This research intention originated from my personal and professional journey as a teacher of English in comprehensive secondary education.

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I, of course, was once a secondary school pupil, in the late 1990s to early 2000s attending a non-selective state funded comprehensive school in the south of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. As a GCSE student I performed well in the subject of English Literature despite the apparently laid-back approach of the teachers and the relaxed wider school context. My high school was small with just a few hundred pupils on roll at the time I attended. It was ear-marked for closure just a few years after I left and a mandatory merger with a larger inner city Stoke comprehensive was agreed as part of the local council's review and regeneration of education in the area. Subsequently, and rather dramatically, it was 'saved' at the very last moment by a local residents' trip to Downing Street to protest about the closure. From this school, I attended a college of further education in Newcastle-under-Lyme and then onto Keele University to study for a joint honours BSc. English Literature and Psychology. My interest in both these academic subjects grew and resulted in me gaining two Masters degrees. My first was an M.A. in English Literature with my second being an M. Ed degree in Education which allowed me to engage in postgraduate social sciences research during my first year as a teacher. I balanced the NQT year requirements with Masters-level research into social constructions and perceptions in the classroom, reflecting on my own role and investigating how I was being perceived by pupils in the learning environment.

In 2008 I took up my position as a secondary school English teacher, gaining QTS¹ in 2008 and beginning my teaching career in September of that year. During my year as a trainee English teacher, my cohort and I were prepped on the value and worth of the subject we would be teaching. We became well-rehearsed at responding to

¹ Qualified Teacher Status

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questions that attacked the value, role and worth of the discipline that we had all opted to teach although such questions of relevance and purpose still appear in my eleventh year of teaching.

I currently teach pupils aged 11-18 years and I enjoy my role as a secondary school teacher; days are busy and fulfilling making them ripe for reflection. My role in the school environment has been a positive one. I like the strong identity which I gain as a teacher and the sense of belonging to a scholastic community (Wenger, 1998). Being on the 'other side' of the educating process means I see the struggle that takes place in secondary schools – the want of good teachers to provide an enriching and broad curriculum and the pressures and demands of an ever-changing prescribed governmental syllabus preoccupied with final results and statistics. As a teacher of English Literature at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 I have witnessed and dutifully implemented many changes to the curricula over the past eleven years yet it is at GCSE level that I feel English Literature has been hit hardest by curriculum reforms and, therefore, arguably suffered the most. Indeed, a long serving member of the English department within which I work told me anecdotally that everything comes back around again. New ideas and policies often appear as revamped versions of old concepts and frameworks that experienced teachers recognise yet must put into practice once again. It was such reflections on the subject that I teach that undoubtedly marked the beginning of my doctoral research journey – an acknowledgement and investigation of past views of English with an ultimate focus on the current subject as it is taught and assessed today.

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It is as a teacher of this subject that draws me to focus on the experience and value of English Literature, not for teachers through the prescriptions of the curriculum but rather for the *pupils*. I do believe that the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are important (and becoming more so) for our young people and do have lasting impact on their lives far beyond the classroom. There is indeed a well-trodden argument that if pupils do well in their English lessons they will do well in their other subjects as many of the skills are directly transferable. However, as a teacher I also appreciate that there are areas of GCSE English Literature which see pupils repeating similar tasks, such as the study of poems in lengthy anthologies, and engaging with texts which many struggle to comprehend let alone appreciate.

I am interested in exploring how the curriculum affects them, how it appeals to them and how it enriches, or not, their wider schooling. What lies behind my interest accords with the view that some of the most thought-provoking and potentially valuable things that happen in the classroom cannot be openly recognised because there is no space for them in the usual discourses of education (Bomford, 2019). English Literature's place as a core curriculum subject in our secondary schools may have been recently and officially reaffirmed - 'The great tradition of our literature should be at the heart of school life' (Gove, 2010: para. 55) - yet the continuing criticism of the content and skills that the subject offers pupils is still under question. Indeed, as Maugham states, 'In an era preoccupied with economic growth at all costs, it [English Literature] needs to articulate its worth better' (2014: 21). In short, the discipline at secondary-school level appears to be forever battling to articulate its proper identity and value. Thus, my research is positioned, more broadly, within a constructivist framework. I support the view that the reality that the pupils experience

within their GCSE English Literature lessons is of their own social construction. This will be expanded in Chapter 3 and explored in relation to findings and discussions in later chapters.

1.3 Research context

This research developed from my role as a teacher for the past ten years at a school in the Staffordshire Moorlands in which many changes towards the teaching and learning of GCSE English Literature have occurred. The head teacher of the school gave full consent for this research to take place and for the views of his Year 11 pupils to be examined and interpreted.

The participating school in question shall hereafter be referred to as 'School P'. The school is situated in an area considered to be socially and economically deprived following the closure of the main industry of coal mining. It was established in 1964 and is defined as a semi-rural academy convertor. It is a state funded non-selective school for pupils aged between 11 and 18 years. At the time of this research the school had 1219 pupils on roll. There are few pupils at the school from ethnic minorities. GCSE examination results in the year of research placed the school higher than its fellow LA schools and schools nationally with 80% of pupils gaining 5+ A* - C including English and Maths.

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The school has sought to keep up with governmental curriculum changes and in doing so the place of GCSE English Literature within the institution has changed dramatically over the past eleven years that I have taught there. The subject has moved from being compulsory for all, to a subject for the academic few, and then back to a subject that all GCSE students must undertake. My research took place in the spring of 2015 at a time when previous methods of structuring English Literature within the school's core curriculum were being reflected upon and there was a consensus that changes were once again needed, particularly as the Progress 8 measure was creeping high on every school leader's agenda. At the time of my research, the subject was being taught to a select few classes and not all final year pupils were engaged in the study of it at GCSE level – this has since changed one more.

This research time was also one of great change for the subject of English Literature nationally. I was still a relatively new teacher when the then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, delivered his vision for a new and improved secondary education system. Gove's (2010) speech outlined his 'new deal' for teachers and his vision for the future of education, centralising much of his vision on the teaching of Literature in schools. In November, 2013, Gove gave further details of the changes that were to be made to the English Literature curriculum in secondary education with a focus on quality, challenging texts and the use of unseen extracts. The pupils who took part in my research witnessed a period of great change to their English Literature education as Gove's changes began to be implemented at the target school.

1.4 The pilot phase

During research undertaken in my pilot study in 2012, which took place in the same Staffordshire Moorlands school, the variety of views towards English Literature at the school became evident. My pilot research obtained views from a small group of pupils and a single member of English teaching staff. The teacher who was interviewed explained why she had decided to enter the teaching profession later in life and stated her passion for the subject. This teacher also spoke about the battle between her love for the subject and the harsh demands of the curriculum. The view that English Literature had worth and importance to its learners was clear in her interview transcript.

The pupils who were interviewed in the pilot also made links between GCSE English Literature and their other subjects. Many pupils stated that this connection was a positive one and that the skills acquired in English Literature had a positive impact on their wider studies at the school. Pupils stated that, to them, GCSE English Literature was seen as a subject which encouraged deeper thinking skills. It was viewed as open ended and pupils felt that they explored messages and moral lessons that were present in the set texts they were required to study. Indeed, the evidence from my pilot research showed that pupils largely recognised the subject as one that allowed them to be heard and engage in debates and discussions.

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The interaction between learners and their environment formed part of their learning process and the experienced curriculum, a theoretical assumption supported by Illeris (2007). In the pilot study, pupils acknowledged the repetitive nature of their lessons as, at times, they were required to repeat the same tasks over and over again to gain a better end result and this approach impacted negatively on their views towards the discipline. However, pupils in the pilot research also showed an understanding of the current relevance of texts such as Shakespearean plays and the positive impact they had on their wider moral outlook. The findings from the pilot research exhibited connections to three main dimensions of learning: content, interaction and incentive (Illeris, 2007). Pupils attached value to the content of their experienced curriculum in English Literature and the connection that this had to exam grade incentives. At the time of my 2012 pilot research I was unsure how students approaching their GCSE English Literature examinations would respond when questioned about their views. My initial thoughts were that many pupils may be merely dismissive of the research focus and unwilling to participate fully as they were approaching the end of their schooling and I was cautious that this would overshadow any meaningful views that they might offer. Yet the pupils were responsive, willing to share their views and eager to participate. I found that their perceptions of GCSE English Literature were largely positive in their outlook and that they each had something to say and a stance to give about the subject as they perceived it at the school. I wanted to know more.

In particular I wanted to know the specifics of what they enjoyed and did not enjoy about this new curriculum as it was presented to them in their classrooms. I was interested in the details and about their personal experiences of English Literature.

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Indeed, the initial research made me reflect and I considered the English department at the school and the endless meetings and dialogue about changes that teachers felt were vital to moving learning forward. Yet, no one seemed brave enough to engage with the pupils and ask for their input. The school did engage with pupil voice and there was an established system of acquiring the views of pupils towards staff, assessments and generalised areas of the curriculum but often these findings, to me at least, lacked any depth. I obtained the school's standardised pupil voice questionnaires and scrutinised them.

The pilot research reaffirmed that my focus on final year aged 15-16 year old pupil participants was the correct decision moving forward as they were articulate, focused in their views and eager to have their voices heard. The pilot study supported my intended research approach of qualitative interpretivist as the recorded data was honest and often blunt. The pilot research and submission of findings allowed me to ensure that my focus was a correct and fulfilling one. My focus now lay predominately with the pupils.

1.5 Research focus

This research is focused on the school subject of GCSE English Literature and its provision within current secondary school education. The focus here lies with the AQA examination board's 2015 GCSE English Literature syllabus or as I call it – Gove's Conservative intended restoration. It investigates what final year secondary

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school pupils think about this GCSE subject following Gove's changes, what it means to them and what they believe they have gained from studying the discipline. It explores, through questionnaires and small-scale group interviews, the views of pupils towards GCSE English Literature as they experience it through teaching and assessment at the Staffordshire school. It ultimately draws conclusions as to how the discipline, post-Gove, is perceived today by the most important people in school – the pupils. It arrives at a time of great change for the discipline with new policy reforms and a new GCSE course recently introduced; with that in mind it further seeks to contribute to the developing understanding of the identity of GCSE English Literature as a subject in our schools today.

The pupils who took part in this research were current GCSE English Literature students. At the time of research, these pupils were just months away from sitting their final GCSE examinations and gave their personal (and often frank) views and reflections on the discipline as they understood it from the teaching and assessment that has taken place at the school. This study therefore seeks to expose what these current learners of the subject think about it at the time of research with the intention that their observations and lived experiences can be used to facilitate a clearer definition of the current identity of GCSE English Literature, which can, in a wider context, aid the development of the discipline at secondary-school level.

The support and commitment from the school was apparent throughout the research. This was evidenced in the help from morning tutors to give out and collect in pupil questionnaires and from teachers to inform pupils when and where to be within the school for their small-group interviews. Throughout the process, staff and pupils

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showed an interest and during the research process and write up the English department requested information from my literature review and findings.

All data collection took place within the school. Ethical approval was received from Keele University Ethical Review Panel and full informed consent was given by the target school's head teacher and the pupils who took part. The data from this research is qualitative and the analytical method of thematic analysis was selected due to its flexibility and allowance for coding to take place.

As a teacher I am both aware of, and acknowledge, the attitudes within the educational sphere towards the subject of GCSE English Literature. The more vocal secondary school pupils will, and do in my experience, voice their opinions regarding the relevance of studying lengthy literary texts and, other than its importance for the forthcoming examination, it can be challenging for teachers to respond to such a blunt critique. I am therefore by definition 'integrally involved in the case' and use my 'involved' status as a benefit to my research as I am best positioned to understand the wider contextual links which pupils refer to (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: 254). Indeed, Verma and Mallick propose that research in education and the social sciences has 'become closely bound up with the values, attitudes and perspectives of the researcher' (1999: 4). They argue that this is not the same as suggesting that the research which is being carried out is subjective but rather that it is inevitable that 'no researcher can claim to be value-free, free from assumptions, unbiased and objective in viewing the world' (ibid). I support these views, that my status is of benefit to the research and that the research is closely bound up with my

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perspective. In Chapter Two, I explore my position further in relation to Gove's changes to the curriculum.

The data collected in my research are the views of GCSE pupils who willingly chose to have their views heard. The research period was just months prior to their final GCSE examinations and, in a broader governmental sense, sits on the cusp of the new (second wave) curriculum changes which were distributed in the autumn of 2015.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis is, hereafter, structured into seven chapters. Chapter Two, the literature review begins with a historical overview exploring the development of the subject that we today know as GCSE English Literature. Then, the current debates about GCSE English Literature are examined and significant models of what English Literature is thought to be are collated and explored. The chapter examines the importance of pupil voice in education to aid curriculum insight and development.

Chapter Three begins with the epistemological assumptions that underpin this research. It presents the methodological design and explains why a qualitative interpretivist methodology was employed in this case-study investigation. This chapter further details the choice of methods, the chosen research environment of

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School P, the sample chosen and participating pupils taking part in this research.

How the qualitative data will be analysed through thematic analysis and coding and the ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter Four, Chapter Five and Chapter Six present the results of this research.

These chapters analyse the qualitative data which has been gathered, namely the completed questionnaires and transcripts documenting the views and experiences of GCSE English Literature pupils. The emerging ideas from these are presented to the reader and discussed in light of the literature review.

The final section, Chapter Seven, is the discussion chapter. It includes an overview of the main findings. Chapter Seven also discusses the key points from the findings, presents the relevance and implications of the findings with links to further potential research including the suggestions for further study. Limitations of this research are also presented here and this chapter ends with the overarching conclusions.

1.7 A note on terminology

It is important to explicate the key terminology that is used throughout this research.

These key terms are used widely in secondary school and therefore are frequently used in this research:

Pupils: I have chosen to use the term 'pupils' when referring to and describing the young people in this research. In some research the term 'students' is used but 'pupils' is the term more commonly used for research into learning within compulsory education in the UK (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).

Key Stages: Key Stages refer to the collective stages of learning for pupils. In secondary education there are two main Key Stages. Key Stage 3 generally refers to pupils learning in Year 7, 8 and 9. Key Stage 4 refers to GCSE level of study. With the removal of Key Stage 3 SATs examinations, Year 9 is often considered a 'hybrid' year consisting of a mixture of Key Stage 3 topics but with emphasis on Key Stage 4 skills. School P adopts this approach with pupils completing Key Stage 4 work (GCSE tasks) at the end of Year 9. Key Stage 5 takes place in Further Education often separately at a Sixth Form College; these are Years 12 and Year 13. School P has a Sixth Form Centre.

English Language: English Language refers, most often, to the technical aspects of reading, writing, speaking and listening. From Year 7 onwards, pupils are taught spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. English Language is a GCSE qualification in its own right.

English Literature: English Literature is integrated into the Key Stage 3 curriculum; therefore all pupils have the opportunity to study works of literature including poetry, prose and drama. GCSE English Literature consists of the critical study of literary

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texts (poetry, prose and drama) and at least one work by William Shakespeare is compulsory.

Controlled Assessment: The controlled assessments were essays and creative writing pieces that contributed to the GCSE English, English Language and English Literature qualifications. They replaced the previous coursework system of assessment. Controlled assessments took place in school under supervision. The tasks and essay questions were published each academic year at the end of the spring term by examination boards. Controlled assessment has since been removed from the curriculum in sole favour of a synoptic exam (Opposs, 2016). However, the pupils who took part in this research will have experienced controlled assessment and therefore a definition of the term is important for clarity of the term.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the research focus from my personal and professional standpoint. Chapter One has provided an overview of the research environment of School P. The details of the pilot phase have been discussed and the connections between that phase and this research are presented. Chapter One has given an overview of my role as a researcher and has defined key terms that are used throughout this research.

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The next chapter will provide a literature review that includes an exploration of the development of the subject of English Literature and current debates regarding GCSE English Literature within secondary education. Significant models of English Literature are explored. The chapter then examines the use of pupil voice in education to obtain the views of pupils and its connections to this research. The research questions are presented at the end of the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my literature review that begins with an exploration of the beginnings of the subject of English Literature. It considers what English Literature as a discipline *is* and where it came from. It explores current debates and discourses regarding GCSE English Literature within secondary education and subsequent models of English Literature which emerged from the Cox Report to what I argue is Gove's Conservative 'restoration model' of GCSE English Literature. In this chapter I argue that there are three key ideologies that have significantly impacted on the recent identity of the discipline: the Coxian model, the New Labour shift and the current Goveian model. I consider the political contexts and ideological shifts between these. I argue that these models hold relevance to this research into the classroom teaching and learning of English Literature today as they provide a valuable platform for the explorations of pupils' experiences. The discussion leads to the rationale for this research and the need to examine the experienced GCSE English Literature curriculum through the concept of pupil voice if we are to further understand the teaching and learning of the subject moving forward following the current changes that are afoot. This chapter concludes with my research questions.

2.2 The beginnings of GCSE English Literature

The historical development and origins that form the identity of the subject of GCSE English Literature is where I begin my literature review. The discipline is currently a GCSE core subject with recent emphasis placed on it following the 2010 National Curriculum reforms. It is polarising and as an arts-based discipline can sometimes struggle to present its wider value to pupils beyond the exam hall (Zervou, 2001, Yeasmin, 2011). I too argue there is always an interest in ‘the deviant case’ and ‘in the history of school subjects and the processes by which they emerged, were sustained, flourished or failed to flourish, adapted or failed to adapt, the case of English in England and Wales provides such a special instance’ (Medway, 1990: 1). Some researchers feel that Literature has a right to a steady place in our curriculum as Zervou proposes:

Literature has a long-established right to a place in the curriculum compared with other genres, on the assumption that it has a formative, lasting and overwhelming influence upon readers. For a long time the view has dominated that literary texts assist young people’s cognitive, affective as well as moral development, infusing socially acceptable and beneficial codes into them – an argument that has supported the idea of a good knowledge of literature as a means of social progress and personal development, however these notions might be perceived. It has been assumed that literary texts have such a power that by simply reading them young people gain an enlightened

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understanding and desirable character qualities – notions whose ideology remains ambiguous and undiscussed. (2001: 8)

There is focus on this assumed 'right' (ibid) that English Literature has within our education system but so much of the support for this 'right' is based on presumed values and benefits that the subject offers to those who study it. This description of Literature appears to rest on the shaping of pupils' characters through the influence that a literary text may have.

To grasp a meaningful description of what the subject *is* can aid both pupils and teachers in their pursuit of making sense of the subject and succeeding in it academically. Indeed, Cox (2005: 10) suggested that 'a lot can be learned from thinking about the question, what is literature?'. English Literature is also, as outlined in the previous chapter, my discipline of choice as a teacher and therefore the subject that I understand and can appreciate, in a research sense, the most. Greater understanding of the discipline following Gove's reforms to the curriculum not only can assist my classroom teaching but that of the department in which I work.

It is true to say that the discipline began on uneasy ground. Uncertainty was present from the subject's early development - Palmer (1965) for example observes how the Oxford School of English was not established until 1894 and even this was in the face of harsh opposition. Novels were originally considered to be beneath poetry and not worthy of study, partly owing to the fact that the primary readership of the novel was female (Cox, 2005). The Board of Education was instrumental in establishing

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the nature of English Literature in the early 1900s. Their approach in creating an initial identity for the discipline focused very much on societal values and high culture. English Language alone was no accomplishment however; it was English *Literature* which was thought to enlarge children's vocabulary and which was believed to be the mechanism of enlarged thought.

As a core academic school subject it is still considered to be relatively new having only existed since the beginning of the twentieth century (Ball, 1985). Despite the view that it is still a rather new discipline, the most striking fact in its history is its current 'high status' positioning in the school curriculum (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990). During the last century the discipline was included as a core National Curriculum subject, however, the journey from its establishment as a subject to its current place has seen many battles along the way with arguments raging over its value, purpose and nature (Eagleton, 1987, Kingman, 1988, Cox, 1989, Poulson, 1992). There has never been a stable view of its place or borders and in its history as a subject there has not been a consensus reached on its identity (Poulson, 1992). Indeed, in more recent times the subject has branched out into the realms of drama, cultural studies, media studies and literacy with close inter-disciplinary connections to these areas.

The main strands of the development of English Literature in secondary education are therefore worthy of exploration as many of these earlier theories and views can be seen within the discipline today. Views of the discipline are connected to the distinct political views of various historical eras with the skills and content of the subject changing to fit political ideologies. This is arguably a complication when

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seeking a definition of the subject as the battles for this are intertwined with the concept of national identity and consequently with individual and group identity. More problematically, 'the subject is hijacked by governments to indoctrinate the public or to prove the educational state of the nation' (Cox, 2005: 10).

2.3 Framing GCSE English Literature

The establishment of the centralised National Curriculum marked a seminal moment for the discipline. It was a radical transformation of English education yet it occurred with little involvement from teachers or schools and without any substantial reference to research within the field (Poulson, 1992). During the 1980s, education became the focus of the Government and subsequent reforms centred on the concern to improve standards. Stemming from the debate initiated by Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan in his 1976 Ruskin College speech, in which he defended a broad curriculum but recognised the need for industrial skills, the views of central Government were now to have a greater influence on what was taught in schools than ever before (Furlong and Phillips, 2001) and it was widely believed that 'things had to change' (Jones, 2016: 75). In this section I explore the identity and pedagogies of the discipline as proposed by the Cox Report (1989) that sought to promote a broad vision of the discipline and the later shifts under New Labour which promoted the 'skills' to equip its learners with functional capabilities.

2.3.1 The Coxian Model

Throughout the 1980s, research sought to investigate the important role of literary texts in education (Johnson, 1981, Collie and Slater, 1987, Eagleton, 1989) and the connection between literary texts and language awareness (McKay, 1982). There was the presumed opinion that English Literature was of benefit to its learners and important for fostering pupils' reading abilities and promoting tolerance for cultural differences. At this time, Jackson argued for the prominence of literary texts in education and the positive impact that fiction can have on young minds: 'Fiction can also help us survive in a chaotic world. The story form is one of the ways we have of imposing a satisfying pattern upon the disconnected impressions of actual experience' (1983: 8) - yet, there was a lack of consensus.

In 1986 the Conservative Department of Education and Science (as it then was) conducted research into the teaching of Literature in schools; their consultation paper presented claims about the benefits of the subject, presenting what they thought the subject was meant to do. Through their critique of the discipline they sought to create a credible definition: 'Much has been claimed for it: that it helps to shape the personality, refine the sensibility, sharpen the critical intelligence; that it is a powerful instrument of empathy, a medium through which the child can acquire his values.' (DES, 1986: 214).

Although enthusiastic in its depiction of the discipline, a consensus was far from established at this point. In 1987, the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth

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Baker, announced the establishment of a Committee of Inquiry to make recommendations for the teaching of English in UK schools. Paradoxically chaired by the mathematician Sir John Kingman, its purpose was to establish a national agreement on the objectives and aim of English teaching to raise standards. The Committee debarred many notable researchers and practitioners from contributing and its findings, which focused on the grammar, comprehension and development of English, stimulated minimal enthusiasm (Rosen, 1988). Immediately following the Kingman Report (1988) one of its Committee members, Professor Brian Cox of Manchester University, was invited to chair a report from which the findings would form the new National Curriculum for English.

The battles concerning the identity of the subject are clearly illustrated by the problems that Cox's committee faced when called upon to create the National Curriculum for English in the 1980s. Indeed, The Cox Report (1989) famously outlined and defined the differing views towards the discipline that its researchers discovered within the teaching profession with the optimism that a consensus could be established. Despite concerns once more that the Committee did not include representatives of the subject, NATE² associates or anyone significant in the field of research, the report did acknowledge a range of views towards the discipline. The Cox Report gave a focus on what Literature in schools should be like: 'To foster in pupils a love of literature, to encourage their awareness of its unique relationship to human experience and to promote in them a sense of excitement in the power and potential of language can be one of the greatest joys of the English teacher. It is also one of the greatest challenges. (1989: 94).

² National Association for the Teaching of English.

Educationalists were largely supportive of the liberalising stance that the Cox Report offered the subject and the teaching of it. The consensus achieved by Cox was embodied in five diverse yet comparable and equally effective approaches to the discipline. The committee did not define the approaches as models, rather as theoretical perspectives (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999). Although presented as five individualised approaches to the teaching, learning and assessment of English, the report stated they were 'not sharply distinguishable' from one another (1989: 60) and thus the views were to overlap. They were, however, deemed to be assessable models of English teaching by practitioners. In response, Davis (1989) argued contemporaneously that the use of these five new approaches in combinations created confusion and was not entirely helpful for understanding the subject. In promoting the use of combinations of the five approaches it arguably established a new formulation of English as a subject. Proposing that combinations of views could be used was an attempt to combine definitions of the subject which had occurred due to different theoretical contexts and were not necessarily comparable.

There was good reason for questioning the five approaches as being under-representative of the discipline in education. Two of the approaches were fundamentally linked together as despite the rhetoric of the report accentuating consensus between the approaches and their comparability, the report can be viewed as broadly favouring the *cultural heritage* model (Poulson, 1992). However, these approaches, or views, went some way toward defining the subject at a school level and sought to explain what English might be in a practical sense. The five

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views were as follows: *personal growth*, *cross-curricular*, *adult needs*, *cultural heritage*, and *cultural analysis*.

The *personal growth* view of English was centred on the development of individual responses to texts and the encouragement of writing to express ideas of the self. To achieve this, it was thought that pupils should be exposed to classic works of literature and was a view of English connected to the theories of F. R. Leavis - indeed, the influence of Leavis in this respect is much discussed in the work of Medway (1990). The view was associated with research undertaken during the 1960s and the assumed need for a child-centred approach to learning in the English curriculum. This *personal growth* view further drew on the work of Dixon (1967) who highlighted the need for creativity in learning. The connections that pupils make with the subject - their 'personal growth' - has also been documented by Chambers and Gregory (2006) who supported the proposed 'personal growth' link between the principles of teaching and learning literary texts and its connection to the lives of human beings. They outlined an approach for investigating this by providing a pedagogical framework that drew on conditions which affect all human beings. Their theory rested on the assumption that what the discipline brings to the lives of learners will subsequently have direct links to their views towards it.

The *personal growth* view did much to establish the place of imagination and creativity within the discipline. In contrast, the *cross-curricular* view focused on the relationship between English and its neighbouring academic fields. It rested on the assumption that it was the responsibility of all educators to help children with the language demands of different subjects. This view was promoted by several

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curriculum policies of the period including the National Literacy Strategy and further supported by school-led strategies such as Everyone Reads in Class (ERIC), Literacy Time and Literacy Hours.

Critical opinions of the *adult needs* view were divided. On the one hand, the view might have involved the development of a critique which would have enabled pupils and wider communities to challenge the political and economic situation of the period (Freire and Macedo, 1987, Poulson, 1992). However, it may equally have been rather less liberal in its stance, instead representing a view that the purpose of the subject was to suitably equip pupils with literacy skills for the world of work – a *workers' needs* view would possibly have been a more accurate and appropriate name. Within the economic context of the 1970s and 1980s and the rise in unemployment for school leavers (Yandell, 2010), this view of the discipline seemed well positioned. Indeed, Chitty notes that the state education system, and aspects of the secondary sector, was, at this time, 'proving an easy target for a number of leading employers and industrialists' (2014: 34). As Government and industry sought to explain the reason for the growth in unemployment, the blame was placed instead upon young people and the low standard of their education including their lack of literacy skills. Evidently, a utilitarian view of the purpose and place of the discipline as a provider of basic skills was central to the *adult needs* view.

As previously stated, the inclusion of the views of *cultural heritage* and *cultural analysis* dominated the Cox Report's theories of the discipline. Such views presupposed the importance of a type of literary tradition, arguably Arnoldian in its

origins and thought and a stance which Michael Gove has explored in his own model of the subject more recently. The *cultural heritage* view presented the appreciation of literary texts as a valuable aspect of the subject and emphasised the responsibility of schools to instil an appreciation of literature. Such exposure to traditional literary texts has been linked to the work of the aforementioned F. R. Leavis (1948) who established the roots of this view and the value of literary texts within education. An understanding of other cultures was also viewed as central to the wider subject. Research at the time proposed that literary texts helped pupils develop a greater cultural awareness (McKay, 1982, Akyel and Yalcin, 1990, Lazar, 1993). The *cultural analysis* view rested on emphasising the role of English in raising critical understanding of other cultures and providing learners with an awareness of the environment in which they live. In some respects, this approach seemed to imply not only a description of the subject but examined its ideologies within a social and cultural developmental sense. At the time, Carter and Long claimed that studying literary texts was 'a sine qua non for the truly educated person' (1991: 1), supporting the view that the subject makes those who study it culturally erudite. Furthermore, the *cultural analysis* view acknowledged the relationships that readers and writers had with their cultures believing that the value of any literary text is culturally determined. A view such as this could have been seen as questioning the limitations of the literary canon and the content of the discipline.

To propose that teachers and pupils can subscribe concurrently to all five views recommended in Cox's report is an example of the confusion that was embedded with the English National Curriculum. Such a lack of consensus is not only present in the documentation of the subject but also in the teaching profession and the views of

those who deliver the curriculum to pupils, as outlined in the work of Goodwyn and Findlay (1999). They too used the Cox Report's five views of English as a tool to gain an insight into the curriculum, finding that, at the time of research, teachers held onto the personal growth view whilst increasingly 'adopted a cultural analysis stance to their teaching' (1999: 19). Such views as those proposed by Cox do still offer a valuable way of understanding the discipline and I believe are a key place to begin to explore the identity of English Literature today. Of course differing views of the discipline, or of any secondary school subject, do not emerge in a vacuum – they relate to pedagogy and political concerns – both of which are fundamental issues that concern the teaching and learning of English Literature and beyond (Poulson, 1992). At the time, Samson (1992) noted the vastness of a subject that struggled to set its own rules in the political climate following the Cox Report:

English is now a large, if perhaps declining, empire assailed by financial pressures from without and the rather tired feuding of different factions within. Student numbers are high, teaching methods fairly standardised, and changes in the curriculum of an individual degree call for long discussion and formal, institutional agreement. (9)

The view echoed the frustration of those trying to seek a 'true centre' and some agreement about what the discipline is as a school subject (Cormack, 2008: 275). With these views still in mind, the next section of my review of literature focuses on the shifts that took place under New Labour.

2.3.2 The New Labour shift

This section examines the shift from the previously discussed Coxian ideology of what English Literature was to the New Labour standpoint and their legacy. New Labour's 1997 manifesto declared that education would be their number one priority. Their diagnosis of the problem at that time was: nearly half of 11 year olds in England and Wales were failing to reach the expected standards in English and maths; Britain had too few 17 and 18 year olds in education; and the workforce lacked basic vocational skills (Heath, Sullivan, Boliver and Zimdars, 2013). In this section I explore how the move to a curriculum driven by skills changed the role of English Literature in secondary education at this time.

New Labour took to office in the spring of 1997 following their landslide election victory. Their agenda was one of improvement and a resolve to make life in Britain better (Chitty, 2014), but the contention surrounding the identity of English Literature was not resolved. Changes to the GCSE English Literature curriculum were in place by September 2000. Indeed, the revisions were promoted through the announcement that standards must be raised for all (Heath, Sullivan, Boliver and Zimdars, 2013). This was a period of sustained educational reforms yet the changes to the curricular of most subjects was 'nowhere near as far-reaching as those in school English' (Jewitt, Jones and Kress, 2005: 6).

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The reformed National Curriculum for English was split into two main sections: *knowledge, skills and understanding*, and *breadth of study*. The first section was concerned with the wider functional skills that formed the practical purpose of the subject: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The second section was concerned with the activities and contexts within which the skills should be taught and understood. The reforms sought to reflect contemporary society with the inclusion of ICT, media and moving image texts, and non-fiction and non-literary texts. For the first time such texts included the exploration of writers' viewpoints towards travel and wider societal issues. Indeed, research at this time proposed that studying literary texts promoted pupils' critical thinking skills (Ghosn, 2002; Parkinson and Thomas, 2000).

The increase in attention on children's literature in the 1990s meant that there was now a greater consideration of the relevance of literary text choices for teenagers (Brittain, 2003). However, the English literary heritage model became more embedded within the wider curriculum and there was a shift in awareness toward texts from different cultures and traditions, arguably reflecting a greater consciousness at this time of multiculturalism and diversity (Johnstone, 2011). The previous Cox Report (1989) had also included a recommendation that teachers should seek opportunities to explore any multicultural aspects of literary texts that many appear yet the report was produced in a climate of debate about the 'increasingly multicultural nature of British society' (Johnstone, 2011: 126) and even Cox himself called this area of analysing literature texts 'especially controversial' (1991: 152).

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The move towards a more functional literacy at this time, and arguably a focus on Cox's prior *adult needs* view, meant that there was an increase in non-fiction writing under New Labour's changes. Imaginative and creative writing became less weighty whilst technical accuracy was as the forefront of the new curriculum. Practical skills included: planning, drafting, punctuation, spelling, handwriting style, Standard English usage and grammar. The changes placed the skills of written composition as more prevalent than before. Research at the time sought to investigate the importance of creativity within the curriculum by investigating what teachers thought (Marshall, 2000, Stevens and McGuinn, 2004). The majority of practising English teachers were likewise drawn to the creative and inspirational models of the subject. Yet, the threat to remove the remaining creative aspects of the curriculum were felt to be significant – '[it is] precisely these pedagogical models which are frequently perceived to be under threat in what may be seen as an overcrowded, over-prescribed, over-tested curriculum overly focused on basic literacy' (Ibid: 1).

Furthermore, communication skills sought to foster the *adult needs* of formal language use and listening skills. The prominence of Standard English and formal spoken speech ultimately meant that any deviations from this were to be eradicated from English lessons. Such a move perhaps stood at odds with New Labour's sense of inclusion for all, further promoting a view that their approach was formulaic, standards driven and a prescriptive attitude to education (Bomford, 2019).

Arguably, the Coxian vision of the discipline appeared lost under New Labour's reforms. The shift to a curriculum centred on skills may have been fitting for the labour market at that time with a move to equip learners, however, the creativity and

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personal growth that the discipline had sought to offer under Cox appeared misplaced. Yandell indeed argued that the New Labour shift towards ‘a narrow functionalism’ had presented lasting change for GCS English which would likely lead to further marginalisation of Literature in the future (2010: 115). The changes to coursework requirements and the implementation of tiers of entry made lasting divisions in the subject which were arguably at odds with the New Labour political stance of social justice and inclusion (Chitty, 2014). The introduction of exam board anthologies further presented a narrowing of the curriculum, this time in relation to textual choice.

In the next section of this literature review I move to focus on the more recent Goveian model of English Literature. I reflect on the previous views of the subject from Cox and New Labour and explore Gove’s battle for common ground between both the skills and the wider knowledge of the discipline.

2.4 Gove’s Conservative Restoration Model

In this section, I focus on English Literature in relation to the changing debates about the subject that began in 2010 under the UK Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. Specifically, I explore the reforms of the former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove. The current state of the discipline is, I believe, a significant product of Gove’s Conservative renewal of GCSE English Literature. I

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therefore explore Gove's political stance at the time he laid out his proposals for the new curriculum. This section explores the changes and the current views towards the GCSE curriculum that we now have in the secondary sector. I consider how Gove managed to shift the subject into being, his decisive actions and his strategies as a 'revolutionised Conservative' (Jones, 2013, 331).

The Cox Report (1989) offered theoretical views of what English is and should be with a broad balanced approach to defining the discipline. Yet New Labour's approach sought to focus on standards and inclusion with a reliance on functionality. More recently, the subject had commanded much media attention. Headlines such as 'Michael Gove's GCSE reforms don't go far enough' (Garner in *The Independent*, 2012) and 'Why reformed, tougher GCSEs are a blessing in disguise' (Tait in *The Telegraph*, 2017) along with concurrent academic educational research (Goodwyn, 2010, Isaacs, 2014, Stock, 2017) highlighted prevailing disagreements and uncertainties when Gove took control of education reform.

Indifferent to much educational opinion and when advisors failed him, Gove took action himself in preparing the new curriculum (Jones, 2013). In the aftermath of the 2008 global economic recession, Government policy makers looked for stability through change and the focus fell on those academic core subjects such as GCSE English Literature. In 2010, Gove delivered a speech in which he outlined his 'new deal' for teachers on the curriculum and his vision for the future of education, concretising much of his planned reforms on the teaching of English Literature in schools: 'The great tradition of our literature should be at the heart of school life. Our

literature is the best in the world – it is every child’s birthright’ (2010: para. 55). From this preliminary stance, Gove adopted his Conservative project of ‘rescuing’ the discipline from what had gone before. The focus on tradition and ‘birthrights’ rather than the skills needed appeared to be the central point of his argument when initiating his reforms, making his school curriculum for English Literature appear more superficially conservative than any prior versions.

Indeed, Gove’s model of the new GCSE English Literature qualification was completely redesigned with his vision at the forefront. The Department for Education’s (2013) teaching curriculum presented the following essential aims for GCSE English Literature at the time:

- Read a wide range of classic literature fluently and with good understanding, and make connections across their reading
- Read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often
- Appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage
- Write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English
- Acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including the grammatical terminology and other literary and linguistic terms they need to criticise and analyse what they read. (3)

Previous coursework and controlled assessment was entirely removed from the subject (Opposs, 2016). There was also a narrowing of literary text choices and the removal of any texts from non-British writers. The speaking and listening skills so adamantly promoted as a key skill under New Labour would now not contribute to the final overall marks. This new qualification was designed on one exam for all pupils without any tiered entry, there was a more rigorous focus on written accuracy, memory skills and the new 1-9 grading system was implemented in secondary schools (although this grading system was not fully implemented at the time of this research).

2.4.1 The standards debate

In November 2013 Gove placed further emphasis on future reform by scrutinising standards - 'I have prioritised English and mathematics because they are both fundamental to facilitating learning in other subjects, and yet PISA³ evidence demonstrates that 15-year-olds in nine other countries are, on average, at least half a year ahead of students in England in both reading and mathematics. Reform of these key subjects is, therefore, a matter of pressing urgency.' (Gove, 2013: para. 2). At this time, the ranking of the UK in the PISA tables had dropped significantly and this arguably had a direct correlation to the focus on a newer more prescriptive

³ The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) used to evaluate educational systems around the world.

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English curriculum. Gove, therefore, expanded his vision for the future as he saw fit to delineate an emphasis on improvements to GCSE English Literature:

The new English Literature GCSE will build on this foundation, and encourage students to read, write and think critically. It will involve students studying a range of intellectually challenging and substantial whole texts in detail... The new GCSEs in English and mathematics set higher expectations; they demand more from all students and provide further challenge for those aiming to achieve top grades. (para. 7-9)

Gove's reforms focused on raising standards to impact the value of the wider economic status of the country. On the one hand, this was a continuation of the New Labour stance on standards yet, Gove's reforms would not allow for comparison with previous models of the subject. Undeniably, Gove's changes at GCSE level were dramatically different to what had gone before as Isaacs highlighted: 'only this time it will be much more difficult. Comparable outcomes, strictly speaking, must be off the table, since the Government has expressly demanded that outcomes not be comparable, and one would expect that by raising standards fewer students will achieve the highest grades.' (2014: 144).

The introduction of the new top grade 9 reinforced the view that effort was being made to raise standards as did the increased difficulty in gaining a good pass (grade 5) rather than the lower pass (grade 4). More recently Sock has argued that this shift

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could be good for the subject: 'This could be interpreted as a positive move to change the perceptions of high-performing students, reducing their complacency in achieving the top grades and preventing large numbers of students assuming they are 'better' than others' (2017: 151). This transformation presented Gove's standpoint alongside prior generations of Conservative reformers. His views corresponded to the standpoint that if standards are too low then schools may ignore aspects of subject content that are at the heart of our culture.

In the aftermath of Gove's changes, Stock went on to further attack the Goveian stance of the improvement of standards, arguing it was a method by which Gove was further criticising the teaching and assessment of the subject:

The meta-choice made here in relation to a subject already widely deemed rigorous – a core subject in fact – is a clear signal of alternative agenda. Or perhaps the lack of rigour declared in English is actually an indicator that the DfE deems English teachers to be lacking in academic quality, and believe that grafting supposed rigour into subjects will improve standards' (2017: 153).

Indeed, Gove's relationship with and judgement of those in the teaching profession was well documented from the onset of his changes as he had a 'willingness to make enemies' (Jones, 2016: 194). Yet, the role of a Coalition Government as an emergency saviour, and Gove's place within that, may have added gusto to his arguments and an empowered sense of blamelessness regarding his reforms. In his

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pursuit for standards, Gove was somewhat of a revolutionary in all its contradictions. He presented his Conservatism stance as a champion of elitism and British tradition yet also he is a reformer who will hold teachers accountable for their failure to advance pupils who are disadvantaged (Jones, 2013).

2.4.2 British literary texts

Gove's position as a 'Conservative' reformer is evident in his views towards literary texts from outside the British Isles. The GCSE English Literature curriculum was changed to focus solely on classic texts from British writers. Criticism of this shift was intense, the removal in particular of popular America classics was not met with much support, and many claimed that the axing of all texts from other countries from the syllabus in English Literature might deter students away from the subject (Molloy, 2014, Mansworth, 2016). Although changes continued to be made to English Literature, opinions on such changes continued to be widened (Miller, 2014, Maughan, 2014). In the face of divided opinion, the Department for Education (2014) issued some 'myth busters' to calm the growing debate surrounding Gove's changes to English Literature:

The new GCSEs in English Literature will be broader and more challenging for pupils than those available at the moment. They will give pupils the chance

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to study some of this country's fantastic literary heritage, including works by Jane Austen, George Orwell, Kazuo Ishiguro and Meera Syal. We have not banned any authors, books or genres. The exam boards have decided what literature to include, subject to the minimum requirements we set out. GCSE specifications are only a starting point. Parents will rightly expect their children to read more than four pieces of literature over two years of studying for their GCSEs. It is important that pupils read widely, as they will in future be tested on two unseen texts which can be by authors outside of the exam board specification. (1)

It seemed that Gove's stance was that pupils were only entitled to share a specific form of literary culture - a narrowing of the canon of texts to promote his own particular Conservative ideology. The illusion that there is one standard of culture regardless of diverse backgrounds and experiences is of course misguided (Coles, 2013). The removal of such texts took the subject back to the 1940s and presented a narrow selection of literary texts to pupils (Molloy, 2014). Subsequently, in retaliation, English departments were believed to merely replace the removed texts with whichever was the least challenging for their pupils (indeed, I have witnessed first-hand this to be the case) yet such a reaction highlights how deeply hurt teachers were at such changes (Didau, 2014, Flood, 2014).

English Literature, as prescribed by the examination board AQA was explained as: 'Through literature, students have a chance to develop culturally and acquire knowledge of the best that has been thought and written. Studying GCSE English

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Literature should encourage students to read widely for pleasure, and as a preparation for studying literature at a higher level.’ (2014: 12). Gove’s stance on literary texts in many ways typifies the educational politics of the right, yet his admiration for British literature, culture and social order may hark back to the idea of knowledge for knowledge’s sake.

2.4.3 Inclusion

Whether or not the discipline was challenging enough for pupils prior to or after Gove’s changes was still of concern and the need for a demanding English Literature curriculum was sought as the *adult needs* for the world of employment required a wider skills set than ever before (Bate, 2014). However, Gove’s changes had made the discipline narrower in its focus than it had been previously (Miller, 2014). Both the National Curriculum in England Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 Framework Document (2014) presented the overarching purpose of study for English at this time:

A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in

such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils, therefore, who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised. (13)

Gove's reforms showed that the curriculum and the wider aspirations of society were indeed connected. There was the suggestion that the discipline had great importance if pupils' comprehension of it allows them to be participating members of their society. Furthermore, the study of literary texts in the form of novels can aid in our understanding of the changing state of human cognition, memory and social behaviour (Groes, 2017). Indeed, Cox argued that English Literature and its subject content was 'involved with the idea of national identity... that the subject is hijacked by governments to indoctrinate the public or to prove the educational state of the nation' (2005: 10).

Gove presented his Conservative ideas of tradition, Britishness and rigour and did so in his own responsive way to the previous short fallings of the curricula which had gone before. The responsiveness of his policy was revolutionary – his ambitions were great, he did not engage with his opponents and he was adventurous in his changes (Jones, 2013). His talk of 'birthrights' (2010: para. 55) in his initial speech on reform to the curriculum arguably set him outside of traditional Conservative thinking. Gove was calling for everyone to achieve their potential and he would make policy tough for those who sought to exclude anyone from this process.

The next section of this literature review looks at research into the study of the key English Literature topic of William Shakespeare. It is a fundamental part of the GCSE English Literature curriculum and an element which all learners will encounter and is, therefore, worthy of some exploration here.

2.5 Shakespeare as sacred

In research seeking the views of pupils towards their experienced curriculum it is important to consider the prominent elements of their learning and the study of Shakespeare is one such element. In this section of my literature review, I explore debates regarding the place of Shakespeare within the Literature curriculum and explain how opinions towards studying the Bard's work are contentious. I explore this because a commonality between each of the pivotal stages in the development of the recent English Literature curriculum is the firm place that the study of William Shakespeare's plays has. It was established as an explicit requirement of the National Curriculum following Cox's 1989 report and is still a compulsory element of the curriculum for all pupils in secondary education regardless of examination board syllabus.

During the 1990s, Shakespeare's plays, above the work of all other literary figures, 'became increasingly dominant in the English curriculum of secondary schools in

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England and Wales' (Batho, 1998: 163). Of course the SAT testing of pupils at Key Stage 3 did much to increase the profile of Shakespeare due to the required element of Shakespeare set scenes, however, his works at this time and today, hold a principal place in the GCSE curriculum.

From the Coxian model of English Literature to Gove's reforms, the reading of challenging literary texts is a keystone of English Literature education (Erricker, 2014). The study of Shakespeare's plays has connections to the literary heritage and the notion of traditional literary values (Coles, 1992, Gove, 2010, Gove 2013). Of course it is of importance that all pupils are allowed the opportunity to engage with the work of Shakespeare and the language and ideas within his work. Yet, the means by which the teaching and learning of Shakespeare is reinforced can be detrimental (Erricker, 2014). Even in classrooms where Shakespeare is accessed in a pedagogically 'active' way, the process of reading can still be a passive one for pupils, in that a meaningful text can become almost mediated by teachers who are mindful of allowing 'access' for all pupils to the text (Coles, 2013: 50). Shakespeare is an important form of reading, yet not that of the 'solitary, bourgeois consumer who is, in the National Curriculum as elsewhere, assumed as the reader of the classic novel' (Yandell, 1997: 277). Shakespeare in many ways draws together the skills and content sides of English Literature. The ability to read the texts and phonic understanding are key to studying Shakespeare yet so are wider contextual understanding skills.

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Yandell also questioned what school pupils 'make of this' (1997: 278). Perhaps the studying of Shakespeare marks a turning point in their study of English Literature and a move away from Key Stage 3 teenage fiction towards more adult reading material. In her research into Shakespeare and English identity, Coles (2004) interviewed a small group of GCSE pupils to obtain their assumptions on Shakespeare, in particular their study of *Macbeth* and why they thought it was part of their course. The views of the pupils rested on Shakespeare's importance 'because he's English' and that they believed him to be a representation of a form of Englishness (2004: 49). The pupils in the research recognised the challenges of reading Shakespeare together as a class, the lack of choice they had in text selection for Shakespeare and that the study of his plays did not, they concluded, have significant importance to their wider learning. The perception of texts and writers is of course bound up with concepts of readers as consumers of meaning. Perhaps Shakespeare allows pupils to learn about themselves as readers and procurers of knowledge.

Debates continue on regarding the canonicity of texts such as the works of Shakespeare yet as the only author whose work is compulsory in the secondary curriculum he greatly divides opinion. Classroom research involving discussions with learners suggest that pupils have arguments to present, indeed, in interviews with pupils Cantwell was moved to state that 'In my school, Shakespeare did not have an uncontested place' (2014: 25). Powell argued that Shakespeare's plays should either be taught as interactive drama texts or not taught at all and removed from the English Literature curriculum altogether:

Shakespeare wrote to put money in his pocket, food on the table and fire in the bellies of his audiences, not strike modern teenagers with fear. Most of Shakespeare's audiences were illiterate. His words were chosen to be spoken or heard, not to be read and deadened behind a desk – they wither when performance is removed.

Our schools are full of Shakespeare, but often in completely the wrong places. Old uncle Bill has become the relative that we invite to family gatherings out of habit, not because we actually want to. He sits there in the corner sharing his stories with anyone who'll listen; the adults lend a patient ear out of a sense of duty and most of the kids have no concept of the vitality of his youth. (2014, para. 1-2)

Throughout my personal and professional connection with the discipline of English Literature there has emerged a commitment to seek further understanding that can offer contributions and inform future action. The extent to which such uncertainty surrounding the subject affects its place within school at a subject-department level cannot be underestimated (Ryan, 2012, Lloyd, 2014, Barrance and Elwood, 2018). From Cox to New Labour to Gove, the subject is very much wrapped up in conflicting discourses when a clear, current, definition which is connected to the lived experience is arguably needed.

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The next section of my literature review, therefore, focuses on the value of asking pupils what they think. This research seeks the voices of GCSE pupils and their experiences of English Literature. I begin by exploring the literature that has examined pupil voice in education.

2.6 Asking pupils what they think

In this section I consider a definition of 'voice' and explore this from a standpoint that any such 'voice' is tied to one's social constructions of the environment they are part of. I explore its role in education, how it can be applied to my research and the wider benefits of obtaining the voices of pupils to find out what they really think about their experiences of the GCSE English Literature curriculum.

2.6.1 The experienced curriculum and pupil voice

The experienced curriculum refers to how learners learn and engage with the emotional and social classroom environment. It may be influenced by the intended curriculum delivered by teachers and made compulsory by whole school and governmental proposals. I view the experienced curriculum as the formal learning that is actually experienced by pupils in an educational setting. It is centred on the

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learners themselves and looks at their knowledge and perspectives. It is concerned with the ability of learners to learn and their ability to engage with the set curriculum.

In education, the term 'curriculum' can and has been used to denote a wide range of meanings. Arguably a definition of curriculum includes both the prescriptive nature of the term and the descriptive experiences of children. John Dewey described it as 'a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies' (1902: 11).

In order to have an impact on teaching and learning there has continued to be a barrage of reforms to improve education at secondary level. However, often it is the simplest ideas that are the best and the utilisation of the voices from within schools is growing in popularity (Fullan and Stiegelbaner, 1991, Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). According to Flutter and Rudduck (2004) it is only the testimony of pupils and teachers that can provide the essential first-hand evidence of experiences needed for school improvement.

2.6.2 Voice

To consider 'voice' I begin with a reflection on the inclusion of 'voice' in schools.

The Department for Education provided schools and head teachers with clear definitions and guidelines regarding the use of pupils in their policy and decision

making. In so doing, the DfE took guidance from the United Nations Conventions on The Rights of a Child (the UNCRC) in that pupils involved in school decision making must be given the right to express their ideas freely in a manner fitting for their age and maturity. The governmental policy phrase of 'pupil voice' was defined as: 'The... ways of listening to the views of pupils and/or involving them in decision-making. You may also hear the expressions 'learner voice' or 'consulting pupils' (DfE, 2014: 2). A feature of effective leadership is engaging pupils as active participants in their education and in making a positive contribution to their school and local community.' (Ibid) The Welsh government also provided their own guidance for encouraging and incorporating pupil voice within schools. The preferred Welsh term was 'pupil participation' (Cymru Gov, 2011: 6) and their government provided schools with a Good Practice Guide to assist schools in their development of a holistic and inclusive approach to pupil participation. Their definition of this aspect of school development was focused on the concept of 'taking part':

'The literal definition of participation is 'taking part'. In the context of children and young people's rights, however, participation is about children and young people having their voice heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives, and being actively involved in decision-making processes.

Participation is a process rather than an event, with varying degrees of involvement from being consulted on a predetermined issue to young people choosing their agenda, making their own decisions and taking them forward.

(Ibid)

Here the concept of 'pupil voice' or 'pupil participation' was tied to the giving of power as pupils gained 'rights' through having 'their voice heard' (ibid). Flutter (2007) argued that pupil voice referred to the methods and strategies that allowed pupils within an institution to present their voices. In effect, it is allowing those pupils to engage in active decision making. Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) further argued that pupil voice aided the development of young people's citizenry, allowing pupils to find their place in their communities and the ever-changing world around them. In UK schools at large there have been several governmental strategies implemented to encourage the use of pupil voice and to support teachers in developing pupil voice within their learning environments. The DfES (2004) implemented the Every Child Matters agenda whilst the Citizenship subject curriculum was established at this time. Asking pupils what they thought and encouraging young people to share their views in a safe and democratic environment can aid not only their own development but can also help the school and wider community (Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011).

Kozol (1991) argued that the concept of pupil voice was all but non-existent to UK education policy makers prior to the 1990s. Succeeding research into pupil voice both in the UK and further afield, has hereby sought to examine the processes, benefits and possible methodologies regarding how best to implement it and what outcomes it can generate for school improvement (Flutter, 2007, Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).

Other researchers examined the use and effect of pupil voice in areas outside of curriculum reform such as Keys and Fernandes (1993) who notably conducted

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research for the National Commission on Education to provide valuable insights into pupils' views and their motivation to learning in secondary school, ideas which are still in line with the views of policy makers as stated in the DfE's justifications (DfE, 2014). Their report aimed to provide a voice for young people and to aid the education service over the following two decades and beyond. In total, Keys and Fernandes (1993) collated a sample consisting of 1160 Year 7 pupils from 47 schools and 980 Year 9 pupils from 43 schools across England and Wales. The questionnaires were lengthy and pupils were also required to complete background questionnaires. Most questions were closed questions, requiring students only to tick a box or circle a number. The findings showed that the majority of pupils did like school, although the study also shed light on several areas of concern as a number of pupils felt school was an alienating experience, some said the work was boring whilst some believed they were victims of bullying. Keys and Fernandes thus argued that however disturbing such findings were, asking pupils what they think produces perceptions upon which policy reform should be based. A concern for pupils' welfare with regards to emotional and behavioural difficulties led Wise (2000) to conduct research into pupil voice. Wise in fact made the argument for utilising the views of pupils as a benefit for teachers and practitioners and as tool of empowerment for children as it 'allows the child to contribute to decisions regarding their behaviour and education' (2000: 14).

Keys, Harris and Fernandes (1995) went on to research the attitudes toward school of both primary and secondary pupils. Their findings again showed largely positive views about schools and teachers. Their research was centred on motivation, however several students gave responses of significance regarding finer points

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about their schooling such as discipline and school work. If their research had included follow up group interviews with such target pupils it may have provided greater insights, something which circled pre-coded responses on a questionnaire sheet simply cannot yield. Their research was also cross-sectional as it compared the attitudes of two different age groups of pupils. A criticism of the study is that the older pupils may have developed more of a dislike for school as attitudes and motivation towards education likely change as respondents mature and get older.

2.6.3 Pupil voice and GCSE English Literature

My interest lies in the views of current GCSE English Literature pupils towards the discipline. I am interested in the details of their experiences and their perspectives. I am also interested in their views about learning and attainment in the subject and how they feel they can best learn and what they believe is most important for their learning. This section of my literature review therefore, connects the use of pupil voice to the research discipline of secondary school English Literature.

Flutter and Ruddock (2004) argued that the starting point for any school reform lay in the classroom itself. They argued that exploring teaching and learning through the eyes of young learners could provide school reformers with guidance as to the areas that needed the greatest improvement. Indeed, Doran and Cameron reported that teachers can learn from the views of pupils and can listen to such views to inform

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their own teaching: 'it can provide the teacher with the valuable information needed for differentiating work and developing effective support activities for individual learners.' (1995: 17).

More recent research by Tehan, Yuksel and Inan (2015) required pupils studying English to complete questionnaires about the English Literature element of their courses and firstly required them to define in writing what English Literature is. The findings showed that these pupils' responses differed vastly:

We also asked our participants to define Literature in their own words. Our students' definition of "literature" tended to be very vague. Some examples of the definitions included phrases or conceptions such as "the meaning of life", "learning and enjoying", "[it] reflects the man's soul on written papers" and "explaining your ideas in an indirect way". Some other definitions included parameters such as artistry, merit, knowledge and culture. However, these factors were not defined further.

We observed that the definitions of literature by our participants were overall positive in tone. Most students did not appear to consider materials such as news or internet publications as "literature". (50)

The authors concluded that the real struggle was convincing students of the *relevance* of English Literature. The pupils recognised Literature as a valuable academic discipline and that the skills it promoted had links to their language and

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cultural understanding skills, yet they felt it had no personal value to them. Their findings showed that pupils used the term 'important' a lot but did not (or could not) explain what qualified something as 'important' (2015: 51). In conclusion, it seemed that pupils were relying on outside authorities such as teachers and the prescribed literary canon to determine what was important to them.

This research undoubtedly provides some insight into the perceptions of what English Literature is from the perspective of learners. Further research into the views of pupil was conducted by Prseada (2013) after concerns were raised over the motivation of those studying English Literature. Three groups each of twenty-five students were required to complete questionnaires consisting of ten questions in order to discover their opinions towards the subject of English Literature. The findings showed that most students were not motivated to study English Literature due to the amount of reading they believed the subject required.

It is tempting to view such pupil voice data as overly simplistic. Indeed, pupils may feel uninterested with the research process or may be unable to articulate their views in a way which truly gives their opinions. Cooper and McIntyre (1996) proposed that it is tempting to conclude that pupils may see things in simpler terms than teachers and that it is easy for adults to suggest that their views are too simplistic and too straightforward. Indeed, when comparing the views of teachers and pupils on classroom craft, they found that both teachers and pupils were deeply concerned with learning and the skills obtained in the classroom. Rudduck and McIntyre noted that 'while both teachers and pupils are concerned with effective pupil learning, teachers have to take account of many other considerations' (2007: 58).

There is understandably conflicting research into the skills gained from classroom learning and a large amount of variables attached to the research in this field. Woods (1990) found that school learning was an unimportant concern for pupils at that time. In contrast to this, Cooper and McIntyre (1996) found that pupils' preferences to learning activities was based on their perceptions of the *value* that such tasks would have for their learning and progression. In their review of the research in this area, Rudduck and McIntyre proposed that 'pupils with varying degrees of enthusiasm for school learning' still tend to express preferences for similar classroom learning activities (2007: 59). They further proposed four criteria pupils use that recur across studies to explain their views on what makes for good lessons and what aids their classroom learning: 'the avoidance of tedium'; 'the pursuit of meaningful learning'; 'the need for togetherness' and 'the aspiration to be autonomous' (Ibid). When asking pupils their views about English Literature, such criteria is of use to organise and make sense of the data.

Academic subjects arguably must show themselves to have elements of rigour and to avoid tedium, a notion which in its past, has sat uneasily with the discipline of English Literature. More recently, Ahmed (2016) argued that Literature is a challenging and complex subject to study yet the wider perception is that all pupils have to do is arm themselves with a pencil and highlighter pens and they are all set to succeed.

Overall, there is a continual drive to utilise pupil voice in education to aid teaching and learning, however, questions relating to whether or not pupils are truly

empowered by this and their ideas actually implemented continue. If we wish to understand the views of pupils then we must ask them what they think. The next sections of my literature review presents my research questions and summary.

2.7 Research questions

The current climate is one of mixed messages regarding the identity and experience of secondary English Literature (Ryan, 2012, Miller, 2014). Clearly much has and is being done to advance the discipline in secondary education and to increase standards through educational reform and curriculum critique (Gove, 2013, Isaacs, 2014, Maugham, 2014, Stock, 2017). However, in the current situation of ongoing government debates, news media criticism and GCSE reforms there is a need for research that seeks to contribute to our understanding, giving a voice to those pupils who are immersed in the discipline at secondary-school level. Contemporary research which involves young learners is crucial as it shows the impact of curriculum reforms in 'real' terms. It is important to continually explore the current educational landscape and how pupils view and understand the curriculum.

The wider governmental demands of a curriculum fit for the work place is an ever increasing part of all secondary subjects and English Literature is no exception. There have been frequent definitions and attempts to establish a correct explanation of English Literature, however, like the struggle with many arts-based subjects, it is challenging to pin down a direct and explicit definition of a subject that is commonly

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considered, by its very nature, to be free flowing and often open to change (Carey 2005).

With these concerns in mind, I ask:

- How do pupils construct English Literature in the secondary-school classroom?
- In what ways do pupils view their experienced English Literature curriculum?
- How do their views accord to different models of English Literature?

Central to my overall aim is the focus on the views of the pupils. Regardless of the perceived importance of the push for achieving targets or the focus on data from school leaders, the voices of the pupils presenting their views as they see English Literature at the school forms the discussion here. By focusing on the views of pupils it is my intention to consider both the enjoyment and rejection of the subject as they see it.

My first research question was designed to consider a pupil-centred view of what the subject is. The question concerns the constructions pupils make of the subject.

Pupils engaged in the learning of the subject will give their definitions that include

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their lived experience rather than a distant unengaged assumption. The purpose of my second research question was to examine the experiences that pupils have of their English Literature lessons at the school. The second question was designed to explore the ways that pupils discuss their experiences and intended to understand how pupils experience and engage with the subject.

Finally, the third research question considers the divide between governmental models of English Literature and the views of pupils as *they* experience the subject. Its aim was to draw together distinctions between the views of these pupils and the views of past models of English Literature. This question was designed to explore how these pupils spoke about GCSE English Literature in ways which researchers may recognise. The question asks specifically how their views 'accord' to such models meaning the extent to which their views agree or are consistent with views from the past. In this sense I hope to pull out such recognisable views of English yet I also hope to consider differences between their views and the models explored in Chapter 2. Thus, such similarities and differences will allow for connections to be made between what those who prescribe English Literature think and what those who study the subject believe it to be.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has highlighted key political shifts to the nature of GCSE English Literature following the establishment of the discipline as a National Curriculum subject. It has explored current research that has sought to investigate the impact of such changes to the teaching and learning of the subject in secondary education. The unease and debates are of course ongoing and this review moved to consider the use of pupil voice in enhancing what we know about school experience. The importance of asking pupils what they think has been explored. Indeed, my thinking about the contribution that pupil voice in this area of education reform has developed. I believe that research that utilises the views of pupils partaking in the new GCSE curriculum is vital.

In the next chapter, the methodological approach will be presented. The case study research design is examined, as are details of the research methods, the research environment, participants and ethical considerations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research focuses on the views of pupils towards their GCSE English Literature curriculum as taught and assessed at their school. This chapter begins with the epistemological assumptions that underpin this research and then argues that a qualitative methodological approach is most appropriate to respond to the research questions. The discussion here gives justification for the nature and context of the case. Furthermore, this chapter presents the selection of participants, questionnaire and interview research methods and data analysis methods. I also address the ethical dilemmas of conducting research with pupils and the inclusion of the voice of the researcher.

3.2 Epistemological assumptions

Grix (2004) claimed, the best way to comprehend what a researcher thinks can be researched and how to conduct that research should begin with one's own assumptions. This section therefore begins with this research's overarching epistemological assumptions.

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This study rejects the view that pupils' knowledge is only transferred to them and that classroom-based learning is merely a passive experience in which knowledge is 'delivered' to learners. It instead takes the viewpoint that learners build on their own understanding in an active way that engages with their prior knowledge and experiences to expand what they know. Pupils' knowledge is socially constructed through their engagement and communication with the ideas of others.

My interest lies in how meanings are constructed in the minds of pupils and the nature of my inquiry therefore focuses on pupils making ideas rather than getting them. I am interested in how the politically-driven education policy is understood by pupils from their engagement with their English Literature lessons and each other. Therefore, constructivism is the most appropriate epistemological framework for my research.

A constructivist approach recognises that learners can make connections with knowledge in many different ways. Whereas many theories explore knowledge and understanding through purely cognitive terms, constructivism also acknowledges affect, social interaction and the meaningful role that being engaged in purposeful activities can have on learners (Kafai and Resnick, 1996). Indeed, this research adopts the perspective that reality is multiple and one cannot seek to provide a fixed response to a problem (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2015). My personal context and the professional research context both rest on a determination to explore and understand a constructed reality that belongs to pupils. To consider the construction of GCSE English Literature at a classroom level, the multiple understandings of pupils are needed. I argue that realities can be multiple and

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meaningful. I believe that research into education is made most meaningful when we analyse how individuals construct the environment, experiences and activities they are exposed to.

Zervou argues that English Literature has an 'assumed naturalness that justifies and upholds our understanding of literature in an educational context' and that it is the setting in which Literature teaching and learning takes place that is more significant than those supposed 'definitive universal values' (2001: 8). Indeed, the emphasis on the ability of the individual, or multiple individuals, to construct meaning applies to this research as does the phenomenological need to 'consider human beings' (Ernest, 1994: 25). Therefore, the perceptions of the world through the eyes of pupils are at the very core of understanding social phenomena and what we can learn about a perceived social reality is from the constructions by multiple individuals (Mack, 2010).

As a reflective practitioner and teacher I seek to promote understanding through the real voices of those immersed in the contextual area at the centre of this research. I fully acknowledge how important the school or 'case' is when exploring the views of pupils towards GCSE English Literature. The truths presented by pupils about the subject are subjectively situated and influenced by their experiences and understanding of their experiences. I stand by the assumption that individuals cannot separate themselves from what they know. My position is based on the theoretical assumption that reality is constructed from a social context and is fluid. Therefore, what we know will always be impacted upon by the social settings that we are part of, our cultures and relationships with others. In support of this, Berger (1972) stated

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that the way individuals see the world around them is affected by what they know or what they believe to know, thus what we know is never solid. Our understanding and interpretations are flowing, constantly changing as our social reality changes. I acknowledge that not everyone in the classroom will view things as I do or share my experiences. Indeed, not all children can be compared and individuals view the world and experiences they engage with differently. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the views presented by pupils in this research are not necessarily the views of all GCSE English Literature pupils. However, they do still contribute voices of worth to the ongoing debate about this GCSE discipline.

From this epistemological standpoint, the next section of this chapter examines the methodological approaches adopted in this research. It explains the connection between the purpose of this study and the use of a qualitative research method.

3.3 Methodological approach

The purpose of this research is to provide insight into the views of secondary-school pupils towards the subject of English Literature. This section examines why a qualitative approach was adopted in order to address this research intention and obtain the data.

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The aims of this study required investigation into the particular context of secondary school, therefore the data collection was carried out in that setting. Both the literature used to frame this research and the research questions indicate a constructivist standpoint. This is a perspective that accepts how pupils view the subject of English Literature is unique and a personal experience that they have constructed.

Individuals use narratives to make meanings of their experiences and such narratives are created from their lived experiences (Bruner, 1986). From the understanding that an approach that is located in the world of individual experience was needed, the methodology of a qualitative, interpretive approach was selected (Silverman, 2005).

I am interested in the multiple realities which stem from this research rather than any fixed approach which involves seeking out one truth or absolute answer. My research intends to give instead a snapshot view of a situation although that does not of course mean that it is incidental or of passing significance. There are, of course, multiple realities in the word 'Literature', even more in the phrase 'GCSE English Literature'. Constructions of each involve a dependence on an individual's perspective, which is in turn is influenced by their wider social and cultural beliefs (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). While there is unlikely to be an absolute answer as to what GCSE English Literature is, it is however the narrative responses and drawn out discussions that pupils engage in to discover what their individual thoughts and feelings are that I am most interested in. Indeed, disciplines such as English Literature themselves do not seek the absolute; rather, they are concerned with the very pursuit of a truth whilst acknowledging that there may not be an unqualified finding or an end to the search. It is the socially constructed ideas, beliefs and

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individual experiences of pupils, as presented through the mediums of written and spoken language, which form the data of this research.

Meaning is central to this study as the pupils were asked to give extended narrative responses to try to explain and grasp the essence of the GCSE subject and their personal experiences of it. A qualitative approach favours this method of gaining individual views and experiences. It is therefore, a most appropriate approach to answer open-ended research questions that seek extended narrative responses. When considering a methodology I was of course aware of the challenges associated with research into the views of children. As I understood that I needed to adopt a methodological approach that would allow pupils to share their experiences yet also be engaged in the research and want to join in. This research rests on the assumption that it is beneficial to ask pupils what they think. Furthermore, it takes the position that pupils have valuable ideas when it comes to their experiences in the classroom and that, as professionals, we should consult them. I was clear that I needed to ensure that pupils were engaged with the research and wanted to take part. I was also acutely aware that it was of great importance that my chosen method of data collection would allow their voices to be illuminated and presented with accuracy. The selected approach allows for detailed descriptive data to be obtained and examined which lets the voices of participants be revealed. It allows for all voices to be heard and reflects the range of views of pupils engaged in the study of English Literature, including those who may disagree with the majority and therefore can bring about social change. The approach supports the overall commitment of this research which is to consider how pedagogy could develop as a result of pupils' views.

The educational context that the research took place in was a key consideration as was the importance of creating a setting that was supportive and allowed pupils to speak and be listened to (Gersch, 1996, Yin, 2014). At the start of my research journey I was aware of the power balance between children and adult interaction (Punch, 2014). Indeed, I was conscious that an approach was needed that appreciated the difficulties of collating pupil experiences in the presence of an adult. The use of small scale interviews connects to ideas of discourse in which power and knowledge are shown and shared through language (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The exploration of how pupils experience the discipline and how they position themselves within the learning experiences was intended to reveal insights into their constructions of the subject at a classroom level.

The main tenet of a qualitative, interpretive approach is that it can never be objectively carried out from the outside. The approach calls for thinkers and researchers to immerse themselves within a chosen environment and my research is very much conducted from the inside out. I am 'integrally involved in the case' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011: 254). Verma and Mallick propose that research in education and the social sciences has 'become closely bound up with the values, attitudes and perspectives of the researcher' (1999: 4). They argue that this is not the same as suggesting that the research which is being carried out is subjective but rather that it is inevitable that 'no researcher can claim to be value-free, free from assumptions, unbiased and objective in viewing the world' (ibid). Narrative discourses do reflect and construct social practice, therefore when analysing the

views of pupils, it was important to examine how they represented their experiences of the curriculum and how these may have been influenced by existing discourses in their school environment (Fairclough, 1992).

3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are at the forefront of concerns in research that involves children as participants. It is important to begin by stating that all aspects of this research were ethically approved by Keele University's Ethical Review Panel prior to research taking place (see Appendix 6) and the school's head teacher gave full approval (see Appendix 5). Indeed, Wellington (2008) stated that consent should first be obtained from head teachers, pupils and parents before research can begin. In this section I examine the necessary ethical concerns when conducting school-based research involving children, beginning with an explanation of what ethical considerations are.

The distinction between true ethical implications and more generalised ideas about morality when conducting research is an important place to begin. Pring challenged the lack of awareness by some researchers to distinguish between the two, defining ethics as 'the rules or principle which should be adhered to in the conduct of a piece of educational research.' (2015: 173). Furthermore, Wiles argued that ethics and morals are often interchangeable terms in educational research and clarifies 'research ethics are concerned with moral behaviour in research contexts' (2013: 4).

The concern in school-based research is whether pupils are able to make decisions about taking part that are free from parental, teacher and wider school dictatorial pressures. Punch also raised awareness of the issue of 'positionality' when researching (2014: 45). Arguably a researcher can never be free from holding a position but the issue should be considered in relation to ethical implications. During the first phase of research, the task of issuing questionnaires was delegated to morning tutors at the school. Only the information sheets, letters of invitation and consent forms identified me as the lead researcher behind the task. During the follow-up interview phase, pupils were given consent forms by tutors prior to them taking part. The first moment that I met the interview pupils was on the interview day itself as I waited for them to arrive ready to start the discussions and at the time of the data collection I was not the class teacher of any of the pupils. Hart (1992) proposed that participants should give shared decisions with adults and be the ones to initiate and direct views arguing that researchers can conduct honest, sympathetic research in environments that they align themselves to, such as their school. In turn I argue that this research was conducted with sensitivity and pupils had the right not to engage in any part of the process. This was a consideration reflected upon during the pilot study.

Pupils who took part in the pilot study were given invitation letters and consent forms however, there was an assumption that they would willingly take part in a small-group discussion. Wellington raised the concern of the 'business of access' and argued that access at all aspects of one's research must be considered within the

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planning, sampling and carrying out stages of research (2008, 63). Reflecting on this, I extended my research methods to include questionnaires. Pupils completed the questionnaire phase of research without my presence and letters of invitation for follow up interviews were also given to pupils without me in attendance. Indeed, informed consent was obtained from all children who chose to take part through an information sheet (Appendix 1) and a letter of invitation (Appendix 2).

Following further reflection on the pilot study methodology as outlined in Chapter One, I decided that the school location was the most appropriate setting for this research to take place in. However, a more neutral room within the school, known to pupils as a 'meeting room' on the ground floor was selected. The environment was not orientated towards the English Literature curriculum yet was a setting which some pupils would be familiar with from meetings with teachers and parents.

Central to my research is the requirement for participants to express honest and frank views and opinions about the discipline of English Literature. This has ethical implications as participants needed to feel assured of confidentiality. I was mindful of this factor through the two phases of data collections. No names of participants were requested and details of their anonymity were plainly expressed in pupil-friendly language in their Letter of Invitation (see Appendix 2) and subsequent consent forms (see Appendix 4). During the interview phase of research I made it clear to pupils that their anonymity would be maintained and if during the discussion they referenced their first names that these would be removed from the transcripts.

Farrimond proposed that ethical considerations must stay with the research during the collation of data too, 'It is important that when you analyse data, they your results are first and foremost valid and sound; that your results have integrity stemming from your own integrity.' (2013: 68). All questionnaires were subsequently collated after completion and stored securely. Transcripts were recorded on a portable Dictaphone device and immediately transferred to a password protected computer once they had taken place – movement of this data for transcribing purposes was via a password protected memory stick. Wiles (2013) and Farrimond (2013) stated the need for all data to be considered and for all voices to be heard. I chose to transcribe the small group interview discussions myself having also successfully transcribed recordings during my pilot study.

3.5 The case study

This section examines the case study as the chosen methodological tool in this research. It then leads to focus on the secondary school and its pupils who form this case.

Robert Yin is a notable advocate of the case study methodology and it is his proposal that I begin with as a starting point for defining and explaining my own case study research. Yin's definition rested on the assumption that those researchers who

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adopt a case study approach wish to examine a 'real-world case' where 'the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident' (2014: 16). Research within a school context is one such example of occurrences and contextual setting becoming intertwined. The second part of Yin's definition rested on multiple sources of evidence and data collection. This research involved two methods of data collection – narrative questionnaire responses and small-scale group discussions with pupils.

The value of the case study as a means by which to investigate an obtainable phenomenon was examined by Johansson: 'The case study should have a case which is the object of study. The case should: be a complex functioning unit; be investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods, and be contemporary.' (2003: 2). Therefore, the purpose of a case study is that it studies a case, an instance, a situation, or a particular which can be of use either to those within the case, those outside of it or both (Yin, 2014, Cohen, et al., 2011). They are rich in narrative description whilst recognising that the case can and does operate with many variables (Yin, 2014).

I argue that the selection of a case study is appropriate to use within a 'real' working school environment. Indeed Cohen, et al. suggested:

'[Case studies] provide a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together. Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis... [they] opt for analytical rather than

statistical generalisation, that is they develop a theory which can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations.’ (2011: 254).

Further to this, as Robert Stake (1998) proposed, case studies are defined by one’s interest in individual cases, arguing that the most critical aspect of case study research is not the method but the very case in question.

3.5.1 The school and its pupils

The case school in this research, School P, is a state-funded Catholic secondary comprehensive school situated in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The school was established in 1964 and is defined as a semi-rural academy convertor. At the time that research took place the school had 1219 pupils on its roll. The percentage of disadvantaged⁴ pupils and pupils with SEND⁵ at the school is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins and those for whom English is an additional language is lower than the national average.

⁴ The DfE (2018) identifies disadvantaged pupils as:

- Eligible for Free School Meals or have been in the last six years;
- Looked After Children (LAC), or those who have previously looked after by the state, but are now adopted or subject to a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order;
- Children with parents in the armed forces.

The Government provides funding, the Pupil Premium, to allow schools to put interventions into place to try to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

⁵ SEND stands for Special Education Needs and Disability.

The school is part of a wider local federation of feeder primary schools and the attainment of pupils on entry to Year 7 is above the national average. The school's last Ofsted inspection graded them as outstanding and the school performs higher than its neighbouring schools in the Local Authority catchment with 80% of pupils gaining 5+ A*-C in their GCSEs, including English and maths at the time of this research.

The school ethos is one that values academic achieve through pupils trying their best. Munn, Cullen, Johnstone and Lloyd described a school ethos as underpinning all aspects of school life and a 'collective understanding of how things are done' (2001: 30). Furthermore, Graham (2014) proposed that a school's ethos is a key factor contributing to whole school success. The school values Progress and Partnership with an active parent council working to support the school. Like many schools currently, School P has a number of national accreditations including International School Status and the UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools mark. It is also a Teaching School and a High Performing Specialist College with the specialisms of science, maths and computing.

The English department at the school employs eleven full-time members of teaching staff. Of these staff, all are qualified teachers and one staff member also teaches GCSE drama. The department chooses to teach the AQA GCSE English Literature and AQA GCSE English Language courses. The teaching of GCSE-level work begins in the summer term of Year 9 and continues until the summer term of Year

11. At the time of this research the AQA GCSE English Literature course consisted of three units:

- Unit 1: Exploring Modern Texts - 40% exam
- Unit 2: Poetry Across Time - 35% exam
- Unit 3: The significance of Shakespeare and the English Literary Heritage - 25% controlled assessment

The first two units of study were tested by formal examination. The third unit of study was tested by controlled assessment meaning that pupils would prepare for and produce a lengthy written response under controlled conditions. The response must be written within the three to four hour time limit and was a 2,000 word essay comparing a Shakespeare play with a literary heritage prose text. Controlled assessment replaced the previous system of coursework and has now since been removed from the course in favour of 100% examination testing. However, the pupils in this research studied full texts. These included a Shakespeare play, a literary heritage prose text, two modern texts and a poetry anthology.

The school organise their teaching and learning timetable on a fortnightly system – week A and week B. At the time research took place, the school increased curriculum time for core subjects meaning pupils were taught English on almost every day of the week. All but one teacher in the department were subject specialists in English Literature.

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The school had, in its past, adopted a traditional 'Literature for all' approach to the discipline, typically requiring the majority of its pupils to undertake the subject without any choice or option being presented to them. A high proportion of pupils at the school had been regularly required to study English Literature and had, therefore, an increased exposure to Literature teaching and learning. For pupils in lower school (Year 7, Year 8) their timetabled Key Stage 3 'English' lessons are just that, a mixture of English Language and English Literature. The skills and topics taught encompass both of the subjects and such skills and topic areas are ultimately derived from the GCSE examination requirements. At Key Stage 3 level, pupils are taught the overarching skills of: reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary and spoken language. The National Curriculum states the purpose of study must include each of these core areas and is very much connected to the Key Stage 4 programme of study with the two levels sharing the same purposes and aims for pupils.

The distinct break down between the English Language and English Literature disciplines appears most explicitly from the requirements laid out by examination boards. AQA presented the discipline of GCSE English Language as covering the areas of: critical reading, comprehension, writing, and spoken language. AQA stated that the subject will allow students to 'draw upon a range of texts as reading stimulus and engage with creative as well as real and relevant contexts. Students will have opportunities to develop higher-order reading and critical thinking skills that encourage genuine enquiry into different topics and themes.' (2018: 11).

3.5.2 Why these pupils?

The pupils invited to take part in this research were 15-16 year olds in the school's Year 11 cohort during the academic year of 2015. The class setting of pupils at the secondary school made the initial selection of participants straightforward. This research required pupils who were studying GCSE English Literature. This criterion meant that just four classes could be used in the research as school policy at this time dictated that only those groups of pupils were to be taught the subject at that level.

It cannot be claimed that these pupils came from the same socio-economic background or gender, but all pupils had a shared sense of the wider school ethos and a shared understanding of what GCSE English Literature as taught and assessed at the school was like. All of the pupils in both research stages were to be entered for both GCSE English Literature and GCSE English Language and were therefore studying towards both qualifications. Research took place during the spring term when the content teaching of English Literature was complete and pupils were engaged in exam recapping and revision during their lesson time.

3.6 Data collection

This section presents the data collection process. It examines the use of questionnaires, small-scale group interviews and the rationale behind the participant sample.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The first phase of research involved printed questionnaires distributed to four target English classes. The development of the questionnaire saw several changes yet ultimately included one 'circle the response' question and seven open-ended questions requiring narrative responses. The title of the questionnaire gave pupils a clear understanding of the focus of the research: 'Secondary School Pupils and English Literature: What do you think about English Literature?'

The questionnaire was designed to prompt and stimulate pupils to express their views. It was created following the guidelines laid out by Wellington (2008) both in terms of its individual questions and the structure of the questionnaire including the order of questioning. Wellington pointed out that hypothetical and leading questioning are to be avoided, placing emphasis on clarity stating that researchers should 'avoid "clever" questions assuming esoteric knowledge' (2008: 105). Much care was taken to ensure that the wording of the questionnaire was wholly suitable

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for the pupils (see Appendix 7) and indeed it was agreed by the University Ethics Panel (see Appendix 6). Conclusively, Wellington argued for his proposed structure to be considered and used by all researchers:

If a questionnaire is broken down into sections, topics or themes, then each section/area of enquiry should follow this pattern, i.e. closed, matter-of-fact questions to begin, followed by the open-ended questions requiring opinions, feelings and value judgments at the end. These can be time-consuming and difficult to answer – and hard to analyse – so it is best to avoid too many. But they will yield fascinating qualitative data. (2008: 104)

Munn and Drever (2007) commended the use of questionnaires in small-scale research particularly within an educational environment. Context is central in this case study and is not a disconnected aspect of the investigation (Wellington, 2008, Yin, 2014). Consequently, the design of the questionnaire took inspiration from the school's 'Student Voice' questionnaire which students and staff at the school were most familiar with (see Appendix 10). These questionnaires and discussion tasks were used widely in the school environment to gain feedback from students about their academic disciplines and were issued to selected students at the end of every fortnight or half term of study. I scrutinised the English Department's version of this (see Appendix 10) and found it to use only open-ended questions requiring students to give extended narrative responses. The format of School P's English Department 'Student Voice' questionnaire was also considered in terms of the layout. Each question was given adequate white space (free from any lines which may constrain

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or force their responses) to allow for and encourage pupils to give written narrative responses that extended beyond a minimal few words, yet not so much white space that they would feel overwhelmed and/or disinterested in completing it.

Pupils read their information sheets and consent forms during their morning registration time – approximately fifteen minutes. Again, this context was important as pupils were familiar with completing worksheet-type activities at this time of the day. This is because the school has a programme of tasks that are completed by students each morning.

All relevant Year 11 pupils were issued with a Letter of Invitation (see Appendix 2) and Information Sheet for themselves and parents/carers (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 3). After three days, consent forms (see Appendix 4) were distributed to the pupils and they made the decision whether to sign or not. The adjustment of language to give clarity to those involved in the research, namely the pupils and their parents/guardians, was of the utmost importance here. The forms and information sheets provided to adults gave a clear insight into the purpose of the research. Each form and information sheet presented to pupils used 'pupil friendly' language choices throughout and each was intelligible to 15-16 year old pupils.

Those pupils who agreed to take part and had signed the consent forms were issued with a questionnaire to complete during their quiet morning registration time. Both Wellington (2008) and Munn and Drever (2007) agreed that questionnaires are most effective when the researcher is not present and that questionnaires provide a vast

range of initial information and responses that lends itself to qualitative analysis. In accordance with these approaches, I was not present when the letters of invitation, information sheets, questionnaires and consent forms were distributed to pupils.

3.6.2 Interviews

Following the use of questionnaires, I judged interviews to be the most effective way of addressing the research questions. Clough and Nutbrown (2008) suggested that the key element of successful interviews is preparation and highlighted the importance of researchers allowing the natural flow of responses to occur.

The type of interview used in this research was that of a semi-structured group interview. These were defined by Punch (2006) as those that require participants to respond to a series of pre-established questions often with pre-set response categories, in that flexibility and variation are minimised yet there is greater standardisation across all interviews. The importance and significance of the use of interviews was offered by Brinkmann and Kvale:

If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them? Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction... Through conversations we get to know other people and learn about their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they live in. In an interview conversation, the

researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world. (2015: 1)

Such exchanges are used widely in educational research and can become a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining knowledge. Rubin and Rubin gave three key rules for 'successful' interviewing, each of which I sought to adhere to during my research: use language interviewees understand; allow interviewees to answer in their own way; focus on the experiences and knowledge of the interviewees (2012: 132).

Whilst my choice of an initial questionnaire method of data collection provided large amounts of data, my subsequent method of interviews allowed for a more focused and in depth exploration of pupils' views. Furthermore, Punch noted that 'qualitative social researchers study spoken and written representations and records of human experience, using multiple methods and multiple sources of data.' (2014: 144). A group interview was defined as an organised situation in which one interviewer talks to several people (Drever, 2006). The situation is often one in which the participants themselves would benefit from being with others rather than engaging in a one-to-one exchange with the researcher (Drever, 2006, Clough and Nutbrown, 2008). Additionally, Drever argued that the interview 'gives high-quality data' and that those asked to take part in an interview usually agree and take the process seriously, answering all questions asked of them (2006: 2).

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The school nurtures a culture of pupil voice and pupils are encouraged to be critical not only of themselves and their academic progression but also of teaching styles used by staff and assessment policies. Indeed, my decision to conduct small-scale group interviews with selected pupils at the school, fitted with the school's established methods of obtaining pupils' views and attitudes towards various topics of school life.

The group interviews consisted of between four and seven pupils. Up to fifteen minutes was allocated for each group interview; this length of time was finalised after taking into consideration the findings from the pilot study. It was felt that this was an adequate amount of time to address all necessary questions and enough time for pupils to stay focused and engaged. If questioning came to an appropriate ending prior to this time then interviews finished at that point. Indeed, the group interviews lasted between five minutes, six seconds and eight minutes, forty-one seconds. The time slots in the room of fifteen minutes worked well as it allowed pupils a chance to chat with each other and get settled beforehand. These interviews took place during lunchtimes within one week.

3.6.3 Sampling

The sample derived from the 15-16 year olds in the school's Year 11 cohort during the academic year of 2015. This research required pupils who were studying English

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Literature at GCSE level. This criterion meant that only four classes could be used in the research.

In total, 114 questionnaires were distributed to Year 11 pupils aged 15-16 years old who were enrolled in their final year of study at the school. Of those questionnaires distributed, pleasingly 99 were returned completed (87% completed). Selective sampling for the second phase was based on the individual responses to the questionnaires. I selected pupils who showed interest in explaining their views. In total, twenty-four pupils were invited to take part in small-scale group interviews. From those twenty-four pupils, twenty-two pupils agreed to attend group interviews.

3.7 Data analysis

When exploring the most appropriate data analysis methods, I considered how words contain meanings and a connection to their context. A challenge of data analysis is of course interpreting the constructs and social reality within it.

Consideration during data analysis was given to my voice within the research which connects to a constructivist and interpretivist standpoint. I acknowledged the data as reconstructed experiences and views that required careful examination. This research centres on individual experiences and therefore it accepts that language is a means for constructing a social reality and that such constructs can and do alter.

When examining the data it was therefore important to understand that views of

pupils may be a product of their classroom experiences but also of the research itself.

The interview transcripts clearly show the voice of the adult researcher present. When collecting data involving children there are of course issues of power relations, therefore Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed the criteria of authenticity and I consider the data from this standpoint, considering multiple realities and my own positioning as a researcher.

Classifying and grouping answers to identify common themes formed the first stage of analysis and prior to any coding or grouping, the researcher themselves must become familiar with the qualitative data sets (Cohen et al, 2011, Grbich, 2013, Silverman, 2014). The data at this point was examined to identify any connections to the literature review and models of English Literature whilst also exploring it for views that may reject those theories.

Silverman (2014) outlined rules for data analysis and I used these as a starting point for my own approach. Firstly, Silverman highlighted the importance of early analysis after the data has been obtained, recommending transcribing smaller sections of data to begin with and then analysing. Emphasis is placed on fair analysis and interpretation. Researchers should explore in depth before speculating about what elements are most relevant and how they might correlate. Punch proposed that coding 'is the starting activity in qualitative analysis' (2014: 175). Furthermore, Saldana defined a code in qualitative enquiry as 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative

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attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (2009: 3). I am aware that a code can sometimes summarise or reduce the data, however I also believe that coding can attribute more 'evocative meaning' to data (ibid).

The contextual setting of the school and the personal experiences of the pupils in this research are connected. Grbich noted that researchers who adopt coding as an analytical method need to ensure that they are firstly familiar with their data and its relevant context but they must also retain a 'broad view' over their data, seeing 'the wider context rather than becoming bogged down in every quotable quote or story.' (2013: 261). Grbich further stated that such an approach works best for researchers who are interested in themes, theoretical concepts and 'participants' narratives/stories, behaviours, values, interpretations, situations, relationships and states of mind' (2013: 262). Richards (2015) commented that the method of coding generates new ideas and seeks to gather material by topic thereby highlighting the importance of coding to deal with qualitative data. My quantitative coding method aligned with the principles put forward by Richards (2015) and Grbich (2013). The data in this research was condensed using coding through collation so that it could be reviewed and the topics and themes presented could be developed in the form of analysis and discussion.

Richards distinguished between the three types of coding methods: 'descriptive, topic and analytical', arguing that it is most effective for researchers to use all three methods when examining qualitative data as together they interpret rather than just describe (2015: 106). The first method was used, descriptive coding, involving the storing of information about the case being studied and variables were examined.

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Next, topic coding was used and data labelled according to subjects and emerging topics. Finally, analytical coding was used to examine emerging ideas and themes. I rejected the use of computer software packages that assist with coding and chose to review all data myself as a method to retain a sense of the context of the experiences given. I was the sole transcribe of all interview data and conducted all coding for questionnaires and interview transcripts.

My purposes for coding were on the one hand to reflect on the coded segments of qualitative data from questionnaires and interview transcripts through 'initial coding' (Saldana, 2009: 4), yet to also make further refined categories and search for blends or combinations of categories. Richards stated that qualitative coding allows researchers to 'learn from the data, to keep revisiting data extracts until you see and understand patterns and explanations... like the filing techniques by which we sort everyday information and ensure access to everything about a topic' (2015: 104). Moreover, Saldana claimed that 'coding is to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorise' (2009: 8).

It is also important to note here that out of the 99 pupils who wished to take part in this research, two pupils expressed on their consent forms that they did not wish for their quotations to be included in the final write up of this study. Therefore, there are two pupils from whom direct quotations are not incorporated at any point in the discussion of findings. These responses were still included and considered in the wider coding and categorisation of key themes but no quotations are used.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed discussion of the adopted methodological approach for this research. It has explored and justified the selection of a qualitative interpretative approach. This approach is the most appropriate for addressing the research questions and recognises my voice and position in interpreting the experiences of pupils at the school.

This chapter has also explained the ethical considerations at the forefront of this research and gives details of the case and pupils central to the study. It gives a basis for the presentation and analysis of the findings in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: How do pupils construct English Literature in the secondary-school classroom?

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained how this data was to be analysed using thematic codes. I therefore structure this findings chapter according to the main themes that emerged from the data. This chapter examines how pupils constructed English Literature in their secondary-school classrooms. It addresses the first research question which is important for this study as it considers whether pupils are able to create a construct of the subject which engages with the culture of the school relating to their curriculum and pedagogy. In the literature surrounding what the subject is meant to be and do for pupils at secondary-school level there is a divide in the discipline. On the one hand the subject is constructed on a basis of the pleasure of reading and the inclusion of classical literature (Gove, 2013, DfE, 2013). However, it also highlights the importance of being critical and analytical, indeed the discipline is centred on the need for critical skills to be developed and refined (DfE, 2013). Such constructs of English Literature are deeply rooted in the ideologies of the subject and this chapter addresses how pupils talk about their experienced curriculum in relation to how they define it. I present findings from both the questionnaire responses and the small-group interviews together in this chapter and, as with all subsequent findings chapters, I include the voices of these pupils throughout. The full data is presented in Appendix 8 and 9 and all references relating

to pupils and pupil voice quotations can be found there. All pupils in this research gave a view about what they believed English Literature to be.

4.2 Literary texts and heritage

The overwhelming majority of pupils in this research stated that they sometimes liked the study of English Literature and from this premise they were then asked to give a definition of the subject. The connection between the study of English Literature and literary texts is a widely accepted one (Johnson, 1981, Collie and Slater, 1987, Jackson, 1983, Gove, 2010). The ideological view of this academic subject as one with literary texts at its heart was strongly embedded into the current curriculum by Gove: 'It will involve students studying a range of intellectually challenging and substantial whole texts in detail including Shakespeare, 19th-century novels, Romantic poetry and other high-quality fiction and drama. (2013, para. 7). When constructing their views about English Literature and what it means to them, pupils made clear that the subject is firmly about the study of texts.

Indeed, 'texts' and 'books' were strong emergent codes from both the questionnaire and interview data. 95 pupils out of the 99 who took part in the questionnaire phase of this research referred to 'texts' or variations of that term in their definitions of the subject. The connection to texts and books was a central point for these pupils' constructs of what the subject is. Pupils also made connections to an importance of certain types of texts and in doing so referenced the study of heritage texts. There

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was a distinction between 'contemporary and past' and the phrase 'English literary heritage' was clearly known to these pupils. Certainly, the structures of their English Literature lessons had been adopted as pupils grasped that some texts are deemed more important than others. The level of importance of individual texts and what importance meant to them in relation to texts was not explained by pupils.

Despite their curriculum having a focus on the study of Shakespeare (Gove, 2013, DfE, 2013), these pupils did not present Shakespeare or his plays as significant defining aspects of what they viewed the subject to be. Despite the works of Shakespeare being studied at every level of their secondary education, pupils did not rest their definition of what the subject is on this writer. There was no evidence that pupils questioned the inclusion of Shakespeare and the study of older texts within their definitions of English Literature. However, pupils did relate to texts 'over time' and referenced the social, cultural and historical content of their curriculum. Indeed, there was an acceptance that 'classical' and 'modern' texts are part of the subject. Pupils showed awareness that English Literature is a subject which, for them, incorporates a wide range of texts from differing literary periods.

The connection between the texts and the wider importance of them within their wider curriculum was somewhat understood by pupils. There was some awareness that the subject is thought to have been created to enhance their knowledge through the study of a range of texts. The links between texts and the relevance of them was acknowledged by pupils. This idea did polarise the pupils in their constructions as many showed an awareness of the importance of the texts whilst others questioned the relevance to their wider schooling. The disconnection between older text choices

and modern young readers is one which should not be ignored. It raises questions of the wider relevance of the curriculum and the appropriateness of the prescribed text choices by policy makers and furthermore the final choices made at a school-department level. Pupils exhibited a want to connect the texts that they had studied to their wider lives and the relevance that they may have to them yet struggled to do so. One pupil defined the subject as: 'reading a novel written years ago to describe problems not in modern society' highlighting the importance of textual choices having a clear connection to teenagers' perception of 'modern society'.

In some ways the school culture of progress was spoken about by pupils when reflected on their constructs of the subject. There were suggestions that they needed to study texts and that they were of benefit to them yet could not articulate why they were of significance beyond the exam. It is important to note that these views were obtained from pupils in relation to their definitions of the subject and in the next chapter further details relating to their more comprehensive experiences will be explored.

Texts do not sit in isolation within lessons and they need to be read and interpreted by learners. 'Reading' was a further key emergent code in pupils' constructions of the subject. The act of reading was often quantified by pupils, indeed one pupil stated: 'lots of reading is done'. Pupils viewed it as a standalone task, perhaps sitting outside of the learning and focused engagement with the lessons. It was identified as a whole class activity which sought to engage everyone in the classroom. Indeed, pupils stated 'we read' emphasising it was a collective activity which led them to

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working with the printed text. A necessary but not always enjoyable aspect of their lessons was the topic of reading aloud around the classroom. In relation to this idea, focussed classroom activities linking to more specific tasks were commented on and the actions of examining texts in 'infinite detail without grasping the whole thing' spoilt the study of texts for some pupils.

77 out of the 99 questionnaire responses referenced 'working with the text' as a defining class activity, however, many sought to challenge this task and questioned if it was academically beneficial for them to be doing it. There was some consensus that the close reading and working with a text was stretching such texts to their limits when seeking to explain the emerging ideas. The classroom pedagogy of teacher-led tasks when texts are studied was viewed critically by pupils. They made reference to being led when seeking their own understanding of texts and being told to copy down their teachers' ideas. In their critique of these methods, pupils were showing understanding that their diverse expression of views should be heard within the setting of the English Literature classroom.

4.3 Being analytical

The 2013 DfE English Literature teaching curriculum presented the skill of 'analysis' as an essential aim at the forefront of the discipline. All pupils appeared to accept that analysing was a key skill of the subject that defined it and that they were

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measured against. However, there were vast contradictions concerning their understanding of what this meant and what it required them to do.

The term itself, and variants of it such as 'analyse', was used in 57 of the 99 questionnaire responses. The term was included within narrative answers both as a verb 'to analyse' and also as a noun 'the analysis'. It connected the pupils' responses and showed the shared educational culture that they were experiencing at the school as it was a term they were comfortable to use. Those pupils who did elaborate on what 'analysis' meant to them made links to deeper meanings and widening perceptions. Indeed one pupil stated: 'the subject aims to analyse the author's ideas and techniques and closely analyse to seek deeper meanings'. The vast extent to which 'analysis' and 'analyse' were referenced suggests that, for these pupils, the terms are linked to the roots of their English Literature constructs:

LA: Well we analyse poems.

G: Analyse "Of Mice and Men" and the "Inspector Calls".

LA: [laughs]

FJD: Do we know what it means to analyse?

B: Erm, well.

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FJD: Because that's a big word that we're using here a lot.

B: Well, find some instances of it and find what something means.

FJD: Ok, yes.

G: Different interpretations of a word.

Pupil B quickly reduced the skill of 'analysis' in practical terms to 'find some instances'. However, their discussion showed a lack of awareness of any curriculum importance. Furthermore, Pupil G stated it means to interpret language: 'different interpretations of a word'. When examining the data closely it becomes apparent that the word can arguably be used interchangeably with the words 'learn' and 'learning' and it appears that 'analysis' and 'analyse' are possibly more grown up versions for the pupils of these basic terms. The pupils acknowledged that the method of analysis had significant purpose for them. It would somehow enable them to obtain a deeper understanding of the text they were studying. The skill was viewed as one of empowerment as though analysing, despite not being able to define the term, was part of the connection between the classroom learning and the final examination result. There was an element of acceptance that analytical skills and processes were a dominate aspect of their shared curriculum experiences yet they had not been clearly told what analysis meant.

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The connection between aspects of the curriculum such as 'analysis' and the connection to the emotions carried within texts suggested the act of analysing allowed pupils to 'experience' the literature. Pupils stated that analysis allowed them to 'seek deeper meanings', thereby establishing a link between texts, analysis and emotions. Other pupils linked the skill of analysis to obtaining more from a printed text, as one pupil stated, '... analyse to seek deeper meaning' and another pupil stated, 'analysing text and what the words mean'. The pupils acknowledged that the skill of analysis had a purpose for them and would enable them to gain more from a novel, play or poem, allowing them to access the subject on a deeper more meaningful level.

It appeared from the data that the process of analysis allowed pupils a freedom of expression during their lessons. If the lesson was analytical, then the perception was that they were allowed to express their views and articulate whatever they wanted about a text:

- Z: We like read a paragraph of something and then we go through it as a class and then we put our hand up and we can say whatever we think about that paragraph. And kind of different techniques used in that paragraph.
- E: There's a lot of practice questions that we go through all the time so within a given time we have to answer a question. Then like peer assess it.

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FJD: Yeah, ok, anything else that you think of that defines what an English Literature class is like?

G: When we're doing poetry we listen to the author read the poems as well. Which kind of helps us to understand it.

FJD: Ok, right, So, really interesting for you being Year 11 students – what skills do you feel you've gained from studying English Literature?

EM: It helps a lot with your techniques, like it helps a lot to link in with your other English exams. Because you learn about what techniques you could use in the others.

R: Yeah.

FJD: What else?

Z: It lets you analyse things in more detail too, more that you're used to doing.

R: Yeah.

Pupil Z stated the openness of the subject of English Literature when pupils are engaged in 'analysis'. Indeed, the freedom to express personal ideas was reinforced as a defining feature of the discipline by scholars such as I. A. Richards (1926).

Arguably, the freedom to express ideas and hear opinions was a central part of the pupils' lessons. The apparent lack of regulations when it comes to analysing is an interesting emerging idea. Research into the constitution of English Literature often rests on the notion of freedom of expression, proposing it as a defining aspect of the discipline in education (Richards, 1926; Berger, 1972; Carey 2005).

4.4 Interpreting

Working out meanings and 'interpreting' was a reoccurring code evident in the data when pupils sought to define the discipline. The process of interpretation was discussed in terms of performance rather than pleasure. Responses from many pupils suggested a focus on final success meaning that they had to overcome certain obstacles in their way. The task of interpreting was view as one of these difficulties.

The responses that showed this code are interesting to consider as pupils offered more emotive responses than they had exhibited previously. They viewed the subject as challenging in relation to the process of 'interpreting' and many fervently explained why: 'we have to regurgitate a certain degree of "scholarly rubbish" which is far-fetched and often misses the obvious denotations'. Indeed, another pupil stated they have to be 'melodramatic about meaningless pieces of 'poetry''. Pupils questioned why that had to interpret and linked their annoyance at the task to the literary texts they were required to study. There was a level of resentment and they were viewing the subject as dull and tiresome. They wondered if the emphasis on

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'interpretation' was really that important: 'trying to analyse what the poet means when half of the time he probably doesn't mean to do it', 'to identify different ideas and discussions and how they influence our society, aka being over the top about a "colour" and its "meaning"'.

Furthermore, pupils early on in the group interviews were quick to voice negative opinions about the subject. Several immediately stated they disliked the subject and they described the subject as being 'boring'. 'The word 'boring' was used repeatedly and several gave reluctant and indifferent responses which also alluded to expressions of dislike as stated in Group D:

FJD: Ok. In as much detail as possible define English Literature as a subject, so what is it? Now I know you did this on your questionnaire but now just collectively, together what do we think it is? Do we understand what is it or not?

M: It's very boring.

I: [laughs]

K: [laughs] |

ME: | [laughs]

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FJD: Ok.

Other groups focused on the specific areas and topic that they had found least enjoyable as Group A explained most clearly:

FJD: So let's start off, it says do you like English Literature be honest. So if we just go around the room.

N: I like it.

FJD: You like it

G: To an extent. Yeah.

R: It's alright.

E: The books are alright but not the poetry bit.

FJD: Fair enough

A: Books but not poetry.

Z: Yeah, the same. Books but not poetry.

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FJD: Ok.

EM: Books not poetry.

These pupils seemed to be in agreement that 'books' are acceptable but the study of poetry was a disliked aspect of English Literature. Many pupils stated they disliked the poetry aspect of their English Literature lessons. Poems were mentioned so much they appeared to be a defining critical feature of the subject for them.

4.5 Performance

The use of creative methods in the classroom such as media, film and performance are not prevalent in Gove's 2013 curriculum reforms. Indeed, it was clear from the data that the use of technology, media and film in the classroom was not a common occurrence for the pupils in this research but when it was present it was memorable. 29 pupils out of 99 referred to 'performance' as elements of their lessons that are important for defining the subject. Furthermore, 14 pupils out of 99 noted the emergent code of 'media and films' through the key words they used within their responses. The responses and justifications for these elements of the curriculum were the lengthiest and most detailed of any referred to suggesting enthusiasm from pupils.

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Pupils felt that learning from and with others in their lessons was an important empowering aspect of the subject. Many pupils used language which connected to supporting others and sharing ideas closely: 'discussing ideas presented... discuss alternative interpretations... participate in activities to help others understand alternative interpretations'. The responses from pupils, gave a representation of classroom life at the school within this emergent code: 'we all split into groups of 3-4 and we were given an A3 piece of paper and Miss gave us each a character or a theme to focus on'. The expansion of their ideas during English Literature lessons was recognised by pupils and was viewed as beneficial. Pupils noted they felt encouraged to look beyond the obvious and give 'alternative explanations' when trying to understand a literary text: 'class discussions... analyse text in groups to contribute our ideas and understand alternative explanations'. This notion of 'alternatives' and follow-up tasks to promote understanding was also noted: 'discussing the thoughts/feelings... discussing possibilities of the meaning of the text/poem', '... in partners to pick out language... our ideas will be brought forward to the whole class'. The largely positive views about this aspect of their lessons presents a move to pupils taking ownership of their learning rather than being reliant on the teacher and raise questions about a teacher-led approach to English Literature teaching and learning.

4.6 Summary

The findings presented in this chapter present some significant consensus with the literature of the new English Literature curriculum. The responses of pupils showed a high level of concise engagement with the subject and the school culture that promotes academic achievement. Pupils expressed awareness that the subject encourages skills of benefit to them and the findings highlight that these pupils were reflective and insightful about the value of their learning and knowledge.

The key emergent codes of: literary texts, analysis, interpretation and performance were evident in the data. Pupils were able to explore these and elaborate on the purpose of each to their experienced curriculum. The inclusion of literary texts and texts of heritage was prominent in pupils' constructions of what the discipline is. However, although some pupils connected texts to their sense of self, the constructions of the subject appeared rather distant from individual pupils. The next chapter examines in further detail the ways that these pupils view their experienced curriculum.

Chapter Five: In what ways do pupils view their experienced English Literature curriculum?

5.1 Introduction

The contextual secondary school environment is a time and place where pupils are negotiating a sense of self that is influenced by the ethos of their school and peers. As proposed by Zervou, 'one realises that the operation of knowledge and power develops in localised formations, so that the sets of procedures need to be contextualised' (2001: 14). Indeed, as final year GCSE pupils their adult lives were drawing close yet their current experiences were influenced by their concerns of what that future may entail.

The literature review showed how the concern for a curriculum that forges links to pupils' adult lives has been of concern to policy makers from the Cox Report to the present Goveian curriculum model. While the previous findings chapter examined how pupils' constructed the subject at secondary school, this chapter discusses how the pupils view their experiences of the discipline at the school and how they define what they have gained from studying it. As with the previous findings chapter, the voices of the pupils are used throughout and I refer to both questionnaire responses and follow-up group discussion responses together in this chapter.

5.2 Shared text moments

The collective learning experience of English Literature lessons was a significant part of pupils' views towards the subject. Indeed, Wenger (1998) noted the importance of belonging to an educational community and the positive impact that has on individuals. In their research into what students thought about school, Keys and Fernandes (1993) required pupils to state their likes and dislikes of school in their questionnaire responses, discovering that pupils' collective attitudes towards school are connected to what they like and do not like. I found the shared learning experiences to be connected to pupils' study of texts and this was viewed by pupils as a positive and enhancing part of their lessons.

The majority of pupils stated that the collective study of a particular text was a very enjoyable aspect of the subject with 72 out of 99 pupils including this in their response. There was a range of individual texts and titles referred to as enjoyable: *Of Mice and Men*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Lord of the Flies*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Medusa*, *Out of the Blue*, *The Falling Leaves*, *Romeo and Juliet*. The findings show that many pupils enjoyed the range of texts that they had studied for within their GCSE English Literature lessons. Some pupils went on to justify why they had enjoyed a particular text, commenting on lively teaching methods and their enjoyment of the plots and key themes; 'studying *Romeo and Juliet* as I liked the romance and imaginative side', 'studying *Of Mice and Men* because I found the book very interesting and thought provoking', 'reading different types/styles of text e.g. *Romeo and Juliet* to conflict poems, I especially enjoyed

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Romeo and Juliet because Sir used to bring it to life with different activities'. Pupils again referred to working with the text tasks and the processes of reading and annotation which they found enjoyable, 'reading *Of Mice and Men*, whilst studying classic poems such as *Charge of the Light Brigade*', 'when going through the books'. During discussions with pupils there was an overall focus on classes being supportive and working together. There was not a sense of pupils getting left behind in the shared learning process and overall their engagement with each other during whole class tasks focusing on texts was viewed as a positive experience.

There was a sense that pupils were not left alone to work with texts and that their experience of learning was indeed shared. Some researchers recognised the ethical dimensions of the choices made by teachers who opt to heavily interpret texts and tasks for pupils (Barnes, 1976, Bomford, 2019). Although the pupils in this research had positive experiences of working together to form a shared understanding, it raises questions whether this approach denies them the position to formulate and articulate their own views and whether or not that would be allowed by teachers. The contextual environment of the school as high performing had clear connections to this learning experience. Bomford proposed that some pupils' learning experiences are affected by the classification of 'the transmission teacher' (2019: 11). In this sense, their lessons were constructed around the central aim of the reinterpretation of knowledge rather than the empowerment of pupils acquiring knowledge themselves. In a school context driven by examination results, the need for pupils to be presented with knowledge of texts rather than the battle of pupils trying to acquire it for themselves can be recognised.

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Pupils did not explicitly question the role of the teacher in their experiences of English Literature lessons, in fact the specific presence of individual teachers was absent from both questionnaire and small-group discussion data. However, the transmission of knowledge to them from their teachers and the final testing of its acquisition raised questions about the boundaries of power in the subject at a classroom level. On the one hand pupils were valued in the teaching and learning process and were helped along the way to their future aspirations yet pupils were not allowed a sense of empowerment through the shaping of their own knowledge.

Furthermore, 18 pupils did give further responses which were coded as 'wider understanding skills'. These pupils considered the skills they had gained from studying the subject in a wider sense giving responses and experiences. They connected the shared text experiences and the skills gained from their study of English Literature to their wider schooling and their lives beyond the school. Pupils stated that they were able to think deeply and judge more closely than if they had not studied Literature: 'I think I have learnt how to read between the lines and how to identify alternative interpretations', 'allows me to think critically' whilst one pupil claimed the subject gave them 'interpretation skills, confidence skills'. Several pupils made the link between the study of literary texts and the discussion and consideration of ideas and the link to wider society; 'reading things in the media and understanding that there is always an ulterior motive behind what they are putting', 'having alternative viewpoints', 'Literature has allowed me to think outside of the box, I have also gained maturity of response'. There was evidence of pupils establishing a connection not only with each other through their shared learning but an understanding of their identity being shaped by the subject.

5.3 Shaping identities

One of the main themes to emerge from the questionnaire responses and the conversations with pupils was the shared acknowledgement that English Literature had impacted on their identities. This echoed the established views in the Cox Report (1989) that recognised that the discipline should develop a learner's sense of self. From examining the views of pupils, English Literature appeared to be influential, impacting on their identities as young people.

Within their communications, pupils referred to characteristics including 'confidence' and 'maturity' and some went on to question the role of the media as an influence on people's views. Indeed, Chambers and Gregory (2006) proposed the significance of the principles of teaching and learning English Literature and the connection it had to the lives of human beings, their imaginations and viewpoints. Pupils were optimistic about these wider thinking and understanding skills. One pupil suffering with dyslexia claimed the subject had supported her: 'I have been able to read a lot more, helping me over the disadvantage of my dyslexia'. Additionally, many pupils gave positive responses regarding their wider understanding and interest in further literary texts; 'wider knowledge of creative written texts', 'I have gained a greater appreciation for older texts and am able to understand different interpretations'. Several pupils further claimed that their individual understanding was linked to thinking deeply: 'allowed me to think about the meanings of certain things', 'the ability to be reduced to tears and

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have my emotions dictated by literary works along with understanding the emotions of characters within the texts and how it links to the way in which they act'. Other pupils acknowledged the need for continued close analysis and consideration: 'to look deeper into texts as there is often a deeper meaning that I don't see at first'. The experiences and processes by which pupils develop their confidence to articulate their own position is akin to them finding their own voice. In this sense, English Literature was working as both their academic subject and their interpretative support as it enables the development of their individual positions.

Question 7 on the questionnaires asked pupils whether or not they felt that studying English Literature at secondary school had been of importance to them. They were required to explain their thoughts rather than only stating yes or no however, in the first instance pupils did clearly state whether they did or did not think it was important. The findings showed that out of the 99 pupils who took part 69 said that studying English Literature had been important to them, 25 said it is not important, and five were undecided. When justifying their stance, pupils connected their reasons to their sense of self and the view that they had improved because of the subject. Of course, many pupils commented that they had improved in their reading and writing skills however, the language in response to this question was largely focused on self-improvement and empowerment.

Pupils showed an understanding that the importance of the discipline rested upon furthering their knowledge of language skills. Many pupils suggested it was important for them to increase the skills that they already had in their possession. Indeed, the language of acquisition and achievement was used frequently and the words 'more',

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'improve' and 'wider range' suggested that studying the subject expanded their currently held skills set making them better in some respect.

Pupils also commented on the connection between reading and writing language skills as a way to improve: 'yes because we need to learn to write properly and formally'. They viewed their experiences of the subject as critical for their self-improvement: 'it grants you the ability to interpret a piece of text and analyse it...'. Further connections were made to the importance of imagination as providing a greater sense of self, 'it helps them gain imagination', ideas which connect to the work of Carey (2005) and the value of the imagination in arts-based subjects. Some pupils did focus on the importance of the literary texts themselves as developing language skills: 'everyone can learn about texts in the past and what they mean or show; also it shows how writing styles have changed throughout the years'. Their views offered links to the learning of history through the study of literary texts: 'it also shows the evolution of language through books', 'different styles of writing are interpreted in modern times due to changes in culture etc.' These findings showed that pupils were confident in making outward connections from the discipline of English Literature to the further skills they had or wished to acquire.

Question 8 of the questionnaire asked pupils to give their views about the purpose of the subject. Responses to this question included four key codes: understanding texts, encouragement of reading, developing critical skills and getting a GCSE and/or job. The language once more was of self-improvement: 'understand', 'encourage', 'develop' and 'get'. In addition, frequent word choices offered by pupils when responding to question 8 included: 'enhance', 'appreciate' and 'help'. The language

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had overall positive connotations towards the purpose of the subject and their responses were largely in support of studying the subject at GCSE level and beyond. Very few pupils claimed they thought there was little or no purpose to the discipline in secondary schools.

Many pupils commented that the study of English Literature allowed them to be guided through the study of their language and enhanced their understanding of it: '[Literature] helps to condition the brain to understand how certain ideas are conveyed using language features'. Pupils felt that the subject had directly affected them: 'it gives you deeper understanding of traditional literature'. They viewed the development from Key Stage 3 study to their current place as final year GCSE students as one of steady progress. Language such as 'enhance', 'extend' and 'develop' were used frequently within responses and suggested that they were aware that the discipline sought to extend their previously held knowledge of reading, writing and the study of texts, a view which Medway (1990) endorsed. Some pupils stated, 'it helps to gain a wider knowledge of different texts' thus suggesting that there was some prior knowledge already there upon which to build on and develop or widen. Many connected 'help' to other aspects of their education and the idea that studying English Literature allowed them a wider deeper understanding of the world around them and therefore a sense of empowerment. Several pupils also noted that the purpose of the subject was to broaden their views and expose them to a depth of ideas: 'to enhance your understand of text that you would sometimes not look at in such depth'. Although pupils felt that the purpose of the subject did rest upon the study of texts, this was in some way a stepping stone to wider and possibly

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greater skills needed for their further lives whether that was their forthcoming plans to study at Sixth Form College or their future employment.

Through their experiences of lessons and interaction with peers, pupils were able to communicate effectively and share their voices about their own positionality in relation to English Literature. Pupils viewed the subject as one which connects learning and individuals' self-determination, placing the English Literature classroom as a place where young people could become empowered as individuals within a shared curriculum experience.

5.4 Acquiring skills

The association between pupils' views of their experiences of English Literature and the acquisition of skills was strong throughout the data. This section examines the three main skills that emerged in questionnaire responses and discussions: analytical, language and understanding. The literature review pointed to policy makers viewing such functional skills as important yet to what extent they were thought to be important differed greatly. The New Labour model marked a shift to skills connected to employment and a raised emphasis of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The current Goveian curriculum values skills that enable pupils to accurately 'criticise and analyse what they read' (DfE, 2013: 3). The emergent idea from this research was that skills were very important to pupils.

5.4.1 Analytical

The emergent theme of 'analysis' ran throughout the views and experiences of the pupils in this research. Pupils not only connected the process of analysing to their constructions of what the subject is but also an important skill that the subject gives them. Indeed, the key emergent code of 'analytical skills' was presented in responses to questions 2, 3 and now question 4 of the questionnaire. Therefore the word 'analysis' was a central term used by almost all pupils at some point in their questionnaire responses.

55 pupils included 'analytical skills' as skills that they believed they had gained during their time in secondary English Literature lessons. The majority of the pupils expressed that being able to think deeply, critically question and analyse were vital skills: 'being able to interpret the meaning of different poems and novels', 'being able to close analyse a text and being able to explain how and why it's important'. Others stated that their skills of analysis had 'improved' and been refined throughout their GCSE lessons: 'my analysis has improved'. Such responses were in line with those views of researchers such as Berger (1972) and Carey (2005) who stressed the importance of analysis and deep understanding in English Literature.

In many responses, pupils explained how the analytical skills they had gained had changed their lives and viewpoints beyond the English classroom, meaning they could now 'look more into depth of the novels and poems I am reading... I have also noticed how I now start to analyse movies and general things in everyday life better'. Again, the use of the word 'better' suggested that these were things which this

particular pupil was already engaging in. Indeed, regarding the idea of outward movement of academic skills, critics such as Chambers and Gregory propose that pedagogical discourses can be measured in terms of 'transferable' skills and the 'so-called learner-centred ideology' (2006: 1).

The link to 'moral' choices by pupils suggested insightful interpretations have been made by pupils when studying texts. This connected to the idea that the subject allows individuals to view and possibly condemn the choices of others. This issue of authority is an important one as pupils seek to position themselves within the school context and in relation to the centre of authority in lessons – the teacher. If pupils are to develop their own sense of morality then they must reflect on the validity of their identities and experiences. Such ideas link to the notion of deep 'analysis' of written and spoken texts as they can be viewed as promoting national pride and the transmission of moral values. Samson (1992) argued that such a 'Leavisite' view towards English Literature and criticism is always connected to one's view of the world in the way that Leavis' literary criticism was linked to his social criticism. In the data, these pupils showed evidence of tying the literary and the social worlds together as they considered and made assumptions on the 'moral' choices of writers.

In addition, pupils repeated the word 'infer' and variations of that word in their questionnaire responses. This was of connected to the skills of 'analysis' and many made the connection to the word 'understanding' in the sense that if they (the pupil) infer or analyse therefore they are showing they have understanding. The pursuit of deeper meaning showed itself to be thoroughly embedded within the pupils' views of both what the subject is to them and the skills it promotes at GCSE level.

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All four interview groups gave skills of 'analysis' as part of their shared comments when asked what skills they felt they had gained from studying English Literature. Group A established analytical skills as important to them but went further and made the connection between the broad term and the sub-skills which they felt are included within in:

FJD: Ok, right, So, really interesting for you being Year 11 students – what skills do you feel you've gained from studying English Literature?

EM: It helps a lot with your techniques, like it helps a lot to link in with your other English exams. Because you learn about what techniques you could use in the others.

R: Yeah.

FJD: What else?

Z: It lets you analyse things in more detail too, more that you're used to doing.

R: Yeah.

Connections were made to the presence of 'techniques', a quantifiable aspect of their broad 'analysis' skill and pupils stressed that the subject allowed them to do

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'more' of this as Pupil Z stated: 'It lets you analyse things in more detail too, more than you're used to doing'. As shown in the data, other pupils used fillers to agree with and show support of this statement.

Pupils in Group B made the links between annotating and the skill of analysing, suggesting that, for them, these two processes go side by side to promote learning within the subject:

FJD: Ok, so it depends what it is. Ok, so what skills do you think you've gained from studying English Literature? So you're right at the end now and you're leaving very soon. What have you gained from it?

G: Well how to annotate more things.

B: And to look at the meaning of stuff and what they can mean.

The terms 'things' and 'stuff' can be interpreted as printed texts distributed during English Literature lessons. The word 'more' was suggestive of the belief that the subject seeks to enhance skills that are already there. Pupil B recognised that obtaining meaning from a text is part of the analytical process.

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Pupils in Group D expanded on their initial statement that they 'analyse some English' lots during their lessons. In doing so, their responses adhered to views that English is a long-winded subject (Carey, 2005):

M: Well it depends what text it is, normally it's a poem or a chapter and we go chapter by chapter and it was horrible and very very time consuming.

FJD: Do you think that so much of what you do does take a long time? And is that a positive or a negative?

I: Negative.

A: Yeah, erm negative. It can take a long time. |

I: | And you have to remember it.

K: Yeah, you can forget. |

ME: | Yeah.

FJD: Quite long winded?

A: Well I do think they split it up quite well. Like they do it in chapters and it's like
|

FJD: | Is
that good when you do it in chapters? Rather than just looking at the text as a whole?

A: Well yes I think so.

Pupils accepted that there is lots of work to get through in English Literature if they are to complete their GCSE course, although they were positive when considering how lengthy texts are tackled, 'I do think they split it up quite well'. The volume of text to get through and 'analyse' was evidently a factor which overshadowed the process of learning for these pupils. In their discussion with each other, Pupil I and Pupil K commented that memory skills are also needed to remember whole texts and chapters. Pupil K commented that 'you can forget' and it is interesting to see that the skills of memorising is of significance to these pupils and connects to the new Goveian reforms as pupils must memorise poems and key quotations for use in their exams.

Pupils also made reference to the use of insight and were able to elaborate on what the skill of analysis meant to them, expanding on their original questionnaire comments:

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FJD: So what skills do you think you've gained from studying English Literature?

What have you gained from it?

L: [cough – laugh]

FJD: Or is that a hard question?

L: [laughs] erm yeah.

C: What do we think we've gained from it?

FJD: Well what will you take away from it?

M: Being able to write in a sophisticated manner.

C: Oooo [laughs]

L: [laughs]

T: [laughs] he's pulling out the big ones.

L: [laughs]

T: Imagery and symbolism.

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FJD: Yeah.

T: In that a red curtain isn't always something about danger, it's a red curtain.

FJD: Erm ok! [laughs]

C: [laughs]

L: [laughs]

FJD: Do you think then that sometimes we overdo things for English Literature? Do you think things are done that aren't necessarily necessary like thinking about that red curtain?

L: Yeah

T: Well most authors intend symbolism and when they intend symbolism they know where it is and I often get quite surprised when people talk about things which suggest randomly it's randomly chosen.

Pupil T recognised the requirement of analysis yet also was able to critique the skill which most pupils had quickly identified as being central to the discipline. There was a generalised agreement from the group that 'imagery and symbolism' were key components analysing. Indeed, the 'red curtain' example, showed a link to perceived

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moments of importance within a text they had studied and showed their awareness of instances that are symbolic are clearly placed into texts for the readers to find. Carey (2005) proposed that critiquing texts in a way which identifies literary terms and then draws them together with an idea or symbolic meaning was a most rewarding aspect of English Literature. The pupils in this discussion group showed awareness of the importance of identifying literary features within the text and they showed an understanding that they must be critical to succeed academically. The process to them however, appeared repetitive and less skilful than Carey (2005) would suppose it to be.

5.4.2 Language

For pupils to use language effectively and be able to articulate their views in spoken and written form is a further connection between the subject and pupils' sense of authority and positionality. The findings showed that pupils referred to 'language skills' as significant skills which they had gained through their study of the discipline. The findings largely centred on the study of printed text, the identification of literary techniques, making improvements in writing style, grammar and discussion.

Pupils who made reference to 'language skills' in their responses made a connection to the understanding of literary techniques; 'explaining what techniques mean and what they stand for', 'stating the technique and what it portrays... to write with much more fluency and knowledge, to a higher standard', 'I have learned how to pick out

and use different language features'. There was significant use within many responses of the word 'identify' as pupils gave the ability to recognise a piece of terminology as an important and memorable skill; 'identifying language features and why they are used', 'can easily identify techniques used'. Other pupils did communicate a justification of this skill: 'I find it easier to spot specific techniques and can suggest the reason they have used'.

Often pupils offered nonspecific responses regarding their improved understanding of grammar and writing: 'improved spelling and grammar'. However, some did state that they had gained better organisational skills when writing, 'a good ability to organise my ideas well to put across a point successfully'. In addition to this, pupils stated 'vocabulary' and the broadening of such vocabulary as a skill they had gained from English Literature: 'my writing skills – knowledge of vocab (*sic*) has widened', 'wider range of vocabulary, being able to identify language types', 'wider range of vocabulary'. In a link to their classroom context, one pupil referred to the 'bank' of words which he had obtained from his lessons which, for him, had improved and widened his language skills: 'how to read, broaden the vocabulary bank, improve my handwriting'. Others commented that the discipline had allowed some freedom to develop a growing writing style: 'I have been able to develop my own writing techniques' and the process of annotation was also present in answers from many pupils: 'I have gained better, more defined skills of how to annotate', showing that this is viewed as a central activity within the subject.

The identification of generic conventions such as language techniques and literary methods gave an insight into how these pupils were working with literary texts. The

activity of annotation was referred to frequently through the data and raises questions about the usefulness of this method of teaching and learning. Such a formulistic approach to exploring texts arguably removed the initial pursuit of a deeper meaning and debate in the classroom. From this standpoint, the literary texts can be seen as secondary to the form and technical elements within it. Pupils placed emphasis on language skills and their improved vocabularies from studying English Literature which in turn shows evidence of formulistic attitudes in their school context. Pupils did not make the association between the 'form' and the written words and fuller titles of texts studied here. Furthermore, pupils did not make links between understanding language and the narratives of stories that they remembered. In total, 59 pupils claimed that language skills were skills they had gained from engaging in the subject of English Literature. Many stated they had gained generic 'writing skills' whilst many more stated they now had improved vocabularies: 'wider range of vocabulary', 'my writings skills – knowledge of vocal has widened', 'better choice of vocabulary'.

Arguably language skills are highly transferable and would help pupils within their other school subjects and their lives beyond the school. Pupils did not, however, explicitly make this link, rather they identified language skills in isolation as skill explicitly gained from their study of English Literature.

5.4.3 Understanding

Pupils considered the skills they had gained from studying the subject in a wider contemplative sense giving justifications which linked the skills gained to their wider schooling and their lives outside of school. This reflected that valuable learning was considered to be more complex and a result of wide interaction between the content of lessons and a reflection on those lessons. 18 pupils gave further responses in relation to this which can be coded as 'wider understanding skills' on their questionnaires.

Pupils communicated that they were able to think more deeply and consider concepts more closely than if they had not studied Literature: 'I think I have learnt how to read between the lines and how to identify alternative interpretations', 'allows me to think critically' whilst one pupil claimed the subject gave them 'interpretation skills, confidence skills'. These pupils also made the link between the study of literary texts and the discussion and consideration of ideas and the link to wider society: 'reading things in the media and understanding that there is always an ulterior motive behind what they are putting', 'having alternative viewpoints', 'Literature has allowed me to think outside of the box, I have also gained maturity of response'.

Other pupils referred to aspects of 'history' within their 'wider understanding skills': 'knowledge of literary heritage texts, finding alternative interpretations of texts, can help with learning history'. The pupils offered a consistent reflection on the benefits of the subject and the open-mindedness of the pupils was apparent in their

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comments: 'finding new authors and books, I think that my imagination and my style of writing has changed for the better since I started reading more regularly'. These viewpoints connected to the proposals of Berger (1972) as arguably what we know is never settled and therefore that our ideas and understandings are fluid and constantly altering. The data here showed that these pupils were open to change and being exposed to new ideas and texts was beneficial to them. Findings such as this may challenge the inclusion of largely prescribed literary texts within the current curriculum and may provoke the need for more pupil choice.

When reflecting on their understanding, pupil's discussions did focus on their study of literary texts. Pupils in interview Group B made the connection between a sense of valuable understanding gained and enjoyment of the subject:

FJD: So meanings, anything else? What do we think we've learnt from it other than just getting through this exam?

LA: Understanding a wide range of texts and stuff.

FJD: So describe times when you've enjoyed studying English Literature, so what have you liked about it? If anything, it might be nothing.

G: Well it wasn't this year but when we did "Romeo and Juliet" that was good, well alright and I preferred that than what we do now. And when we did "Of Mice and Men".

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FJD: But you preferred “Romeo and Juliet”?

G: Oh yeah.

FJD: Why did you prefer that?

G: I don't know really it was just something that seemed a bit better and it appealed to me.

FJD: What else have we liked? I mean it might be nothing, you can say nothing.

A: [laughs]

L: [laughs]

A: Well watching actually watching the films and then seeing what it's like in the books.

FJD: Do you think films are important?

A: Yeah.

G: Yeah |

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LA: | Yeah

Pupil G commented that the study of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* had been enjoyable as had the study of the American novella *Of Mice and Men*. In addition, Pupil G stated that of the two texts it was *Romeo and Juliet* that was the most appealing. The connection between reading and appreciation was shown in their discussions. There was the recognition that reading and appreciation are linked within the discipline, possibly that the appreciation is the reward after the study of the texts.

The task of 'reading' were explicitly commented on in further group discussions, however other pupils went on to explain that, for them, they did want to be presented with a wide array of literary texts, ideas somewhat in line with the views of Gove (2013):

T: When you get to read things.

FJD: Yeah?

M: Oh yeah, reading is good.

L: Yeah.

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FJD: So the reading side of it yeah? Is there anything in particular that you've read or you've studying that you think, you know, that was really good and that should be continued on or other years should study that?

T: I don't know. I just know I do like it when they choose a book to do that I've already read so I have |

M: [[laughs]

T: | And it's going yeah I know what this is about.

C: Well I like reading a book you haven't read as then you get to learn and it's not boring looking at something that you've not done.

These pupils presented reading as an enjoyable task and skill yet there was also the assumption made that the current curriculum assumes that pupils in secondary education do not willingly read and do not read at home. Pupils C stated: 'Well I like reading a book you haven't read as then you get to learn and it's not boring looking at something that you've not done'. Of course, the purpose of their English Literature education is arguably to present these pupils with text to read, study and possibly enjoy but these pupils' comments do raise issues regarding wider reading and how their views may be used to inform the decisions of class teachers and wider departments when planning. At the school, there is an emphasis on whole texts,

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however, teaching approaches differed according to target grades, ability and teaching styles.

Pupils further established the view that the concept of being introduced to new texts was of importance to them:

N: Erm, we've been reading 'Of Mice and Men' a lot and some of the lessons were on a lot of context so the history and everything which was really interesting.

E: Yeah.

FJD: Is that important do you think? The history side of it and learning about the background?

N: Yeah.

FJD: Ok.

A: The introduction to new texts and unseen texts.

N: Yeah.

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Pupils A and N from interview Group A supported the views of latter groups and indeed Gove (2010), in that the 'introduction to new texts and unseen texts' was significant to them. Such references to texts from others countries and cultures, such as John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, served as a reminder that this text and others have since been removed from the curriculum (Molloy, 2014). Pupil N also made the connection between studying texts and gaining skills linked to history and wider contextual factors that inform the stories they are studying.

During discussions, pupils led on to discuss the inclusion of *films* within their lessons. On the whole these we found to be positive teaching and learning resources: 'Well watching actually watching the films and then seeing what it's like in the books'. This suggested that this area of the curriculum of English Literature would benefit from further examination. The use of media and film within lessons, and for these aspects to become further established, was clearly memorable and engaging for pupils.

Pupils' experiences of English Literature were found to be connected to the skills they had acquired. Although pupils did make reference to some elements of the topics they had studied, the data showed that the skills of: being analytical, language skills and understanding were important to them. The next section of the chapter explores pupils' experiences of English Literature in relation to being measured and tested.

5.5 Being tested

Pupils took part in this research during the spring of their final year of Key Stage 4 education. Their GCSE examinations were due to take place just months after they shared their experiences with me and each other. All participants were accepting that the GCSE exams were of importance to them.

Their language indicated a shared culture and understanding in relation to the exams and this was most prominent in the group interviews. The focus on the forthcoming examinations were in the minds of the pupils who took part in the interview stages and many commented that their focus at that point, and indeed their reason for studying English Literature had been to pass the final GCSE English Literature exams.

These pupils were studying for the AQA exam board's exams which comprised of three units outlined in chapter 3. One unit consisted of an examination based on previously studied prose texts. Another unit consisted of an exam based on previously studied poetry and analysis of unseen poetry. The final unit consisted on a lengthy controlled assessment essay requiring them to compare a Shakespeare play with an English literary heritage text. Overall, those who referred to the exam did so in a rather dismissive way towards the discipline itself:

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Z: You need to read it in a certain amount of detail to get the good grades in the exam and with the writing in the exam.

FJD: And are those skills of worth past the exam?

Z: [laughs]

EM: [laughs]

G: Some of them.

Z: [laughs]

G: It depends. I think maybe, some of them.

A: Depends.

N: It depends what your interests are I suppose.

EM: I suppose if you go on|

Z: | and what job you're doing.

FJD: Yeah. Do you think English is linked to any particular jobs?

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R: English teacher!

ALL: [laughs]

FJD: [laughs] Yeah, other than that?

Z: Hmm, journalists.

N: Yeah.

EM: Historians to a certain extent.

R: Yeah.

E: Most jobs have an aspect of essay writing to them so yeah.

Pupils in interview Group A struggled to explain the worth and value of the skills they had acquired through studying English Literature. They agreed that their value was sufficient for the GCSE examination as Pupil Z stated, 'You need to read it in a certain amount of detail to get the good grades in the exam and with the writing in the exam.' When asked about the use of such skills beyond the summer exam this group of pupils struggled to answer.

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These pupils may have benefited from being told how the skills that they have are important and that they will be of use later on in life. There was much rhetoric from researchers relating to the subject's position and how it projects a view of itself. As explored in Chapter Two, English Literature has historically become largely prescribed; previously perpetuated through the 'English for Ages 5 to 16: Cox Report' (1989), 'The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for Teaching' (1999) and further accentuated by the rigorous assessment system for GCSE. Goodwyn argued that such rigours have resulted in the ever increasing marginalisation of the subject for learners and teachers alike, leading to the disillusionment of those who partake in the subject: 'literature teaching is suffering from many years of a reductionist pedagogy' (2010: 18).

The views of these pupils in interview Group A goes against the ideals presented by Carey: 'Literature does not make you a better person, though it may help you to criticise what you are. But it enlarges your mind, and it gives you thoughts, words and rhymes that will last you for life.' (2005: 260). Pupils struggled to make real-life links to wider jobs and careers, as they struggled to make the connection between English Literature and their futures beyond the examinations. This battle reappeared throughout the data and was a concerning trend.

Although these pupils did make the connection to teaching the subject and jobs which explicitly incorporate writing skills such as 'journalists', they could not make more detailed connections. This presents a challenge for the subject in terms of how it can articulate its worth. The school environment had gone some way to amend this and there were, at the time of research, corridor displays in relation to careers and

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possible further and higher education routes that subjects such as Literature connect to. This could perhaps go some way to supporting the struggle that the subject has in presenting its worth. It seemed that these pupils accepted that English Literature lacked a clear route towards a career.

In Group C, Pupil M commented on the difference in studying English Literature according to a particular school year: 'Because in Year 10 it was more analysis of books and literature of written work but in Year 11 it's more exam prep'. Others also commented on the change in school experience from year to year; 'It changes from year to year'. Pupils in interview Group D made links to passing the exams and moving on to university where they felt that the skills that had gained from studying English Literature may still be of use and of importance to them: 'When we get to university we will be expected to use those analysis skills for every subject.' Such comments do suggest a lasting legacy of the skills provided from the discipline and possibly the subject could do more to promote its transferable skills that are of benefit to students in their lives in further and higher education. Arguably, the connections between the skills obtained here at school-level study and their real-world applications should be made clear to pupils. If pupils are to trust in the value of the skills they are gaining and refining them, there may be a greater appreciation of the subject across all schools where pupils are required to study English Literature.

There did not appear to be evidence that these pupils were competitive with each other for final grades. Pupils did not articulate fears of failing or being overwhelmed and in the ever growing focus on pupil mental health and wellbeing in schools I feel this is an important point to note. The context of the school is high pressured as the

culture is one of academic achievement and one where everyone should try their very best. The discussions between pupils showed no ridicule between them for either over-achievement or perceived under-achievement. Rather, there was an acceptance that they were trying and working at a pace suitable to each of them. In this sense, there was a shared understanding and experience of what they had to do. There was an acceptable established and this was not contested. Instead the discussions were ones of cooperation and a collaborated understanding in relation to their personal academic success.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that despite the political rhetoric that the subject should connect to the adult lives of pupils, GCSE pupils in this research do not conclusively believe that it does. Certainly, the connection between studying the subject to gain the end qualification and obtaining future employment and/or a place in further education was known to these pupils. However, pupils struggled to articulate the details of that link.

Pupils' experiences of their English Literature lessons showed a genuine insight into the culture of the school. The sharing of the learning experience was prevalent throughout the data and this shared experience often focused on the study of texts. Other students recognised that the literary texts brought a class together and allowed for a close, shared learning experience. There was little reference to

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individual teachers being active in lessons and being part of the experiences that these pupils had. Moreover, their views were centred on them as individuals and as a collective group. The shaping of their identities was shown to be a product of their experiences when studying English Literature. The texts sparked discussions and close analytical responses. Pupils relayed characteristics including 'confidence' and 'maturity' within their communications, suggesting that the discipline had been of benefit to them.

Overall, skills were a significant part of their experiences and the acquisition of skills. These related to: analytical, language and understanding. Analytical skills were deemed not only common skills attributable to the subject but were also highlighted as rather significant and well regarded by these pupils. Many felt that the skills of analysis supports them in other academic subjects and may help them in their lives beyond the subject of English Literature. The findings here firmly establish that the process of 'analysis' is deemed highly significant for almost all pupils who took part in either the questionnaire phase or the follow-up group interview phase. Many struggled to define it, but others during group interview discussions did unpack the term and presented it as an exploration of printed texts and the pursuit of 'deeper meaning'. Others explained it as the use of literary terms which they use to identify and then explain aspects of language such as 'imagery and symbolism'. Language skills were mentioned frequently and the act of being able to 'pick out' key bits of information and even words was deemed of significance to the pupils. Pupils commented on wider-understanding and made links here to the value of the skills they had gained, how these may help them in other school subjects and in their own

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development and progression. In the most part, the 'skills' were presented as positive aspects of the subject.

The findings also highlighted pupils' awareness of the skills needed to obtain good grades in their examinations. Therefore, the final section of this chapter has examined the emergent theme of 'being tested'. There was a shared culture of wanting to do well and pupils did not use language which demeaned each other in relation to academic achievement. Rather, there was shared culture of progressing through a shared experience of the subject.

The next chapter presents the findings in relation to the final research question examining how their views accord to different models of English, Essentially, the next chapter considers what pupils want and what they believe is important within their curriculum. The findings in the chapter will thus seek to present the remaining issues raised by these pupils and whilst doing so, making links to the views of policy makers.

Chapter Six: How do pupils' views accord to different models of English Literature?

6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters examined pupils' definitions of English Literature and their experiences of the subject at their school. They explored their created constructs and the connections that these had to their social environment. Pupils expressed awareness that the subject provided them with some beneficial skills. They related their definitions of the subject to several main themes: literary texts, analysis, interpretation and performance were all evident throughout the data. Pupils discussed the place of literary texts, texts of heritage and working with texts in lessons. The inclusion of literary texts and texts of heritage were prominent themes in pupils' constructions of what they believed the discipline is. However, although some pupils connected texts to their sense of self, the constructions of the subject appeared rather distant from individual pupils. Their discussions showed a concerning trend, that these pupils struggled to connect what they gained from the subject to their lives.

This final results chapter continues with the presentation of the views of these pupils. It examines key discussion points that focus on pupils' wider views of the subject, whether they believe it to be important and ultimately what they think English Literature should be doing for them as young people. This chapter reflects on the

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models of English put forward by policy makers and works towards establishing a model for English Literature based on the results of this research's pupil voice – asking the question: what do pupils want from the subject?

6.2 Engagement

This section begins with an examination of what these pupils liked about the subject. They were asked both on their questionnaires and in discussions to expand on the parts of English Literature they had liked. To begin with what pupils like is a useful (and optimistic) starting point in research such as this. In their research into what pupils think about school, Keys and Fernandes (1993) required pupils to state their likes and dislikes of school in their questionnaire responses, arguing that pupils' collective attitudes towards school are connected to their likes and dislikes. In line with this assumption, question 5 of my research's questionnaire required pupils to present moments when they have enjoyed the study of English Literature. Question 6 required them to state their dislikes and will be addressed later in this chapter. The responses to these questions were mixed and the findings detailed with the majority of pupils taking time to give lengthy in-depth responses.

6.2.1 Prose and poetry

The literature review showed that the Goveian 'restoration' model of English Literature appeared to centre from Gove's own personal love of literary texts and reading. There was a view that pupils are personally entitled to study works of literature. Connecting literary texts to a political rhetoric of social inclusion from the Coxian model through to the current curriculum. Significantly, pupils are only entitled to their part of social inclusion if they learn about particular texts and as the literature review indicates, this was narrowed dramatically by Gove.

The inclusion of texts was viewed by pupils as a significantly enjoyable part of their curriculum. The majority of pupils stated that the study of a particular text was a very enjoyable aspect of the subject with 72 out of 99 pupils including this in their response. There was an interesting range of individual texts and titles referred to and referenced in some way as 'enjoyable' by these pupils, namely: *Of Mice and Men*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Lord of the Flies*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Medusa*, *Out of the Blue*, *The Falling Leaves*, *Romeo and Juliet*.

The findings show that many pupils enjoyed the range of texts that they had studied for their GCSE English Literature course. No pupils mentioned key texts that they had studied lower down in the school during Key Stage 3. Indeed, several of the key texts stated were British in their heritage and several were from elsewhere in the world. It was interesting to see the range of texts given by pupils at a time when texts

from other countries are being removed from the curriculum (Molloy, 2014; Bate, 2014).

In the examination of text choices and why pupils may enjoy certain texts rather than others, there is the question of which are best. The idea that some texts are 'better' in some way than others is perpetuated by reformists rather than pupils. Pupils learn about the books on the prescribed curriculum but the inclusion and dismissal of texts connects to the idea of a cultural knowledge being imposed upon them. Several pupils went on to justify *why* they had enjoyed a particular text, with some commenting on lively teaching methods from their class teachers and their enjoyment of the plots and key themes: 'studying *Romeo and Juliet* as I liked the romance and imaginative side', 'studying *Of Mice and Men* because I found the book very interesting and thought provoking', 'reading different types/styles of text e.g. *Romeo and Juliet* to conflict poems, I especially enjoyed *Romeo and Juliet* because Sir used to bring it to life with different activities'. There was a range of texts noted by pupils including poetry, prose and plays. Pupils again referred to working with the text tasks and the processes of reading and annotation which they found enjoyable: 'reading *Of Mice and Men*, whilst studying classic poems such as *Charge of the light brigade*', 'when going through the books'.

These pupils also made reference to the background of the texts they were studying and links to the history aspect of English Literature as they enjoyed learning about historical and social contexts: 'certain poems and learning about the stories behind them e.g. the history of a war poem'. Using the text itself as a springboard to other, further enjoyable elements of their lessons, pupils made reference to learning about

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social class as an agreeable part of learning: 'when reading *An Inspector Calls* (J. B. Priestley) and learning how the working class were treated'. Others enjoyed learning about American society and history, 'studying *Of Mice and Men* which related to the history'. The removal of many text choices that were well cemented into the English Literature curriculum was a radical move by Gove as part of his improvement on the previous curriculum. Yet, the Goveian model appreciates the wider social, cultural and historical heritage of texts than any previous reformists sought to offer. These pupils are a product of a curriculum in which they must show a deep understanding of text reception. Arguably, this has enhanced the subject and widened pupils learning.

Interest and widening of understand in relation to the texts were also shown in responses. Many of the participants studied conflict poetry from the AQA poetry anthology which is concerned with poetry of war and conflict from around the world. This appears to have been an enjoyable topic for many of the students with some references to individual poems as enjoyable aspects of the subject: '... I also liked the conflict poetry', 'reading interesting poems such as *Out of the Blue*'. Some responses included references to wider reading and enjoyment: 'I really enjoy reading the novels and poetry as, although I do not enjoy every text, I find them interesting. I especially liked reading *Jane Eyre* as it contrasted with what I normally read and so opened my eyes to different genres', 'studying *Lord of the Flies* as I find the book more interesting'.

Other pupils stated that the initial excitement and enjoyment of studying the set texts was short lived: 'when I found out I was studying *Jane Eyre* – the reality was not so

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good, when reading all of the books for the first time – especially *Lord of the Flies* as it is an interesting anthropological study. When studying for myself some of the poems – as poems are beautiful in their concise way of saying many things, *The Falling Leaves* etc dispelled this’.

The addition of film and media tasks, in relation to their studying of texts, was also enjoyable aspects for these pupils. Many stated that the use of films in the classroom helped them to understand the texts further: ‘watching documentaries to gain further understanding of the poems’, ‘when we get to watch films in class as it helps me to understand the texts better such as *Romeo and Juliet*’. Others stated, ‘watching the films, it allows you to understand further what is going on in the text’. Pupils commented on the comparison between the printed texts and the film versions: ‘comparing the book to the film’, ‘relating novels to film’, ‘relating the books to the films’. Other pupils noted the use of film and media to enhance their understanding of the social, historical and cultural background of the texts: ‘when we watched the documentary on 9/11, I found it interesting’, ‘watching the 9/11 documentary in order to get a better understanding of a poem’, ‘we also watched the *Of Mice and Men* film to see what times would have looked like in 1930’s America and to see if the film matched the books’ detail’. The use of such media resources in the classroom, allowed pupils to connect the texts to the wider world and therefore gave the printed text greater importance to them. To refine the ability to criticise, arguably pupils need to engage with resources outside of printed texts.

There were also pupils who took part in this initial questionnaire phase of research that did not ‘enjoy’ the subject of English Literature, therefore the final key emergent

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theme in relation to question 5 is simply the code of 'never', in that these pupils claimed they did not find anything enjoyable about the subject at all. To give a balanced presentation of the findings, it is important to state this. It is also important to note that two participants left this question blank and I therefore include their lack of a response within the 'never' code. With this in mind, 14 out of the 99 pupils taking part claimed that nothing was enjoyable. One of these pupils stated: 'when we studied *Of Mice and Men* I thought that it was extremely boring'. Others claimed: 'I prefer English Language', 'I haven't had any good times', 'I have never enjoyed studying it' and one stated 'I don't enjoy English or any subject'. Some of these pupils did remember aspects of the course, such as texts, but stated they were not enjoyable.

Other pupils connected the reading of texts to their own personal growth. 34 students commented that the importance of the subject was the interest and appreciation gained of literature and reading, a clear benefit of the subject for them and linked to the notion of being well read and culturally aware, ideas which connect to the views of Carey (2005). The written responses within this code were among the most lengthy of all responses as many pupils spent time extending their ideas more fully than they had for previous questions. Pupils referred to 'children' reaping this benefit and many responses were lacking in a personal link to themselves and their peers as high school pupils; rather, they chose to comment on the benefit and appreciation of the literature and reading for others rather than it directly affecting them.

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Poetry was considered an aspect of the English Literature subject which was disliked by many pupils. General dislike of the poems themselves and the frequent class tasks centred on annotating the poems were given as the defence for not liking poetry. Pupils stated 'studying poetry, some of the poems are un-engaging and hard to interpret, meaning that they become more difficult' and 'I dislike the poem side of English Literature as I think that they are boring and find that they hold very little information'. Such comments suggest poetry is felt to be a challenging aspect of the subject for these pupils at this time.

The code of 'encouraging reading' was significant in the responses and affirmative language was clearly tied to this as many pupils used the word of 'enjoy' throughout their response to the final questionnaire question. This was an interesting statement for so many pupils to make, particularly since many had been critical of the discipline previously in their questionnaires. All of these participants had, at the point of research in School P, read and closely studied a vast range of approved literary texts as dictated from the AQA GCSE English Literature course, yet many still did not like the discipline and certainly did not enjoy the reading element of the subject. The words 'encourage' and 'enjoy' were also used by several pupils within the same response with one stating: 'I think that the purpose of studying English Literature is to encourage people to read and enjoy novels and poetry more'. There was a common connection made between these pupils' current education and their prior learning.

Many pupils referenced other learners and 'people', 'to broaden a person's knowledge', and 'can get people interested in reading books', which tied their perceptions to the wider world and the place of Literature for all. The data showed

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that pupils also presented studying Literature as a benefit to others: 'to allow students to have the opportunity to read and have the skills to analyse and understand text in depth'. There were also references to 'children', highlighting the outlook of these final year pupils as they reflected on the benefits for younger children in education: 'it is meant to inspire people to read more and give children a chance to read classic books and some of the best books in the world'. Such findings illustrated that these pupils were able to show an understanding that the subject may make a wider societal contribution to others and that English Literature may be beneficial to many not just the few. The perceptions connected to the policy interventions of their 2015 curriculum.

Language with positive connotations continued throughout the responses to the final questionnaire question. Words such as 'broaden', 'opportunity' and 'inspire' were commonly included. Furthermore, the phrase 'to allow' was integrated into many responses suggesting that these pupils felt that learning was their right and that they were entitled to such an education which included the studying of English Literature, ideas which link to the ideals previously presented by Gove (2010).

The literature review exposed the ideological reasons behind Gove's changes and 'restoration' of the English Literature curriculum. Gove's focus rested on raising standards through a conservative view that Britishness and rigour would harness a respect for literary texts. Several respondents gave answers which suggested that students studying the subject were doing so in order for them to learn or acknowledge some kind of respect for texts. Others stated that the purpose of studying English Literature is 'to be made aware of the importance of texts and how

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to have respect for texts and writers'. To be 'made aware', is suggestive that books are important or hold some cultural importance in their world. The data showed that pupils had been presented with an ideology that texts must in some way be respected and that they held a wider importance.

6.2.2 Shakespeare

Connections to the literary heritage of the texts being studied were made by many pupils. Links to the notion of the literary heritage was evident in the Coxian model and the Goveian model of English Literature. These pupils showed it is entrenched in their lessons and perceptions of the subject. One pupil stated 'I think it is important to study English Literature as it gives you the opportunity to study famous British tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet*'. Others created a stereotype of the subject stating, 'Yes, why Literature is part of our heritage and is an honour to past great writers'. The use of the word 'honour' is highly emotive and connects to a sense of privilege that these pupils may have from their exposure to literary texts. Yet, some pupils made the connection to the present day and its importance now for these pupils more closely, 'poems and texts should be updated to reflect... modern day society.' This opens up a wider aspect of the data and the perceived old-fashioned nature of the subject in secondary schools. Gove's focus on tradition and 'birthrights' was evident in the responses, however, pupils used language which suggested this was a rather outdated part of the subject to them. One pupil stated, 'I think it's pointless and [we] should study real life English not pretentious poems that mean

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absolutely nothing to today's generation', a statement which links to the notion that these students want the texts that they are studying to speak to them as young people today, something which is arguably one of the many challenges currently faced by the subject of English Literature in secondary education.

The association to tradition and the Goveian stance of 'birth right' was shown through the inclusion of the key words of 'appreciation', 'heritage', 'learn', 'British', 'children' and 'understanding' throughout the responses to question 7 of the questionnaire. Many of the voices of pupils here are worthy of further, more detailed exploration. One particular pupil's response focused on the interest and appreciation of literary texts in a wider curricula sense:

Yes, why Literature is part of our heritage and is an honour to past great writers that we are able to feed from their triumphs and understand the many fans of Literature. We are able to learn and engage in reading, which many students may never do and considering reading is such an important skill it is vital in education.

This showed an understanding that the printed text can be at the centre of the teaching and learning within English Literature and that it is acceptable rather than out of date or unimportant to the subject. The above comment from this pupil places literary texts at the heart of the subject and acknowledges that reading is a 'vital' skill

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for them. These words tie to the feelings and emotions which such disciplines can hold and in a Goveian sense is the very underpinning of the subject today.

The Department for Education's (2013) teaching curriculum presented the idea of appreciation as a central aim for their new English Literature curriculum. Prior to that, Carey (2005) argued that the richness of the subject also lies in the interpretation of texts. The critical appreciation and interpretation of texts are thoughts to be important to the subject and were also shown to be of significance to pupils in this research.

The critical aspect of the English Literature discipline is tied to the notion that literary texts act as moralising works (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990). Possibly, texts are supposed to teach pupils about something other than the basic story. Possibly texts are supposed to have a greater significance on the lives of their readers than merely surface stories with no depth. Getting this across to pupils is arguably the challenge. The pupils in Group A made the connection between the literary texts they have studied and their 'heritage':

E: I think it helps embrace differ authors like Shakespeare. I thought that was good when we studied Shakespeare and understood him as a playwright.

FJD: Do you think that Shakespeare's important?

E: Yeah. I do.

FJD: Why do you think he is important?

E: Well it's just |

Z: | It's our English heritage and you learn about your past and how he's created an education system like now.

G: I think it can all be quite outdated sometimes. I think that's what puts people off because there's stereotypes of what you think when you think Shakespeare and therefore some people just automatically switch off. If it was a more modern or interesting book or something that then...

The literature review outlined the centralisation of Shakespeare within the curriculum. Whether Shakespeare is a positive factor of the secondary curriculum or a detrimental one to the subject as a whole is part of an ongoing debate (Coles, 2013, Erricker, 2014). However, the study of William Shakespeare's plays made pupils make a connection to their notion of heritage and the past. The pupils were not wholly in support of older texts however, Pupil Z stated 'It's our English heritage and you learn about your past' which shows a connection to their culture (Jones, 2009). The use of the personal pronouns 'our', 'you', and 'your' demonstrated a relationship between literary texts which are studied and a sense of belonging in terms of race and culture. Shakespeare had been discussed previously by these pupils yet they were able to elaborate on their initial questionnaire views. Pupil G stated 'I think that's what puts people off because there's stereotypes of what you think when you think Shakespeare and therefore some people just automatically

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switch off.’ This is an attitude towards The Bard and his works which was first presented in the pupils’ questionnaires. The notion that Shakespeare can ‘automatically’ switch people off are views which are also acknowledged by Powell (2014) in that Shakespeare polarises people.

In Group D, Pupil W also made the connection between their own cultural identity and the perceived of importance that Shakespeare has within the English Literature curriculum:

K: And cultural skills and cultural knowledge of books and ideas and of other people’s opinions and stuff.

A: It gives us a small understanding of your literary heritage but it’s not really very broad enough for you to get that purpose across.

FJD: Ok. Anybody else?

W: Well as British people you associate, well you assume, that everyone has read Shakespeare or something. But if we hadn’t done English Lit then no one would have read Shakespeare. It’s just getting rid of that knowledge that you just assume everyone has.

A: Yeah.

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FJD: Ok. Well maybe it comes down to the haves and the have nots?

W: Oh yeah.

FJD: Maybe one day you might look back and think yes I'm glad that I did that.

W: Yeah.

FJD: Or maybe you won't.

K: [laughs]

ME: [laughs]

Pupil W's statement that 'as British you associate, well you assume, that everyone has read Shakespeare or something' placed Shakespeare in an important role for them. That Shakespeare and this aspect of the Literature curriculum are so important that it is a factor of what it means to be a British person. This suggests that the study of Shakespeare is culturally important to the pupils as it is part of what makes them British. Coles (2004) interviewed a small group of GCSE pupils to obtain their assumptions on Shakespeare. Their views also rested on Shakespeare's importance 'because he's English' and that they believed him to be a representation of a form of Englishness to them (2004: 49). Within the data, Shakespeare clearly emerged as a highly significant aspect of English Literature. Shakespeare did spark

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debate in discussion groups. Pupil A questioned how much such cultural value the subject of English Literature has in fact given them, 'It gives us a small understanding of your literary heritage but it's not really very broad enough for you to get that purpose across.'

Whether English literary heritage texts is important to these pupils and the wider discipline was also discussed:

FJD: Hmm ok. So, do you think it's important that students study English Literature why and why not?

M: Well I think it is but to a certain degree. It's like you need a basis for techniques and stuff and of course to be able to write.

FJD: Do you think things like studying your Shakespeare and "Jane Eyre", do you think that's important for you, for leaving school?

A: It depends on where you're going. Personally, I'm not going anywhere where me knowing what happened in "Romeo and Juliet" is going to be of a single speck of use to me but for some people yes, if you're going down that route. So, in your future life maybe yes, but for me personally no.

W: Hmmm

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FJD: Why do you think it might be important?

W: Well because I think you need a general knowledge and I think reading texts is a good way of getting engaged with history and it's a good way of gaining other people's insights into the world. It's a good way of us evaluating ourselves. And we need it to read books and if English Literature is the only way that people are going to do it, if it's the only way that they are going to actually analyse and if they have to be taken through it by a teacher, then I think it's important that we do.

Pupil A recognised that the studying of *Romeo and Juliet* was not of significance for their later life beyond secondary school. There was however, a perception of English Literature aiding the greater good of the education system:

'I think you need a general knowledge and I think reading texts is a good way of getting engaged with history and it's a good way of gaining other people's insights into the world. It's a good way of us evaluating ourselves. And we need it to read books and if English Literature is the only way that people are going to do it, if it's the only way that they are going to actually analyse and if they have to be taken through it by a teacher, then I think it's important.'

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Pupil W referenced the teaching of literary texts as a means by which individuals gain a 'general knowledge' and 'engaging with history'. Pupil W also made reference to wider beliefs on the importance of Literature acting as an evaluative tool for human beings (Carey, 2005; Richards, 1929), 'It's a good way of us evaluating ourselves.'

Pupils felt that the purpose of the subject of English Literature was to 'open your eyes' which arguably the fundamental role behind all of our curriculum subjects:

FJD: So finally then, what is English Literature meant to do? What is the purpose of studying it? What is it meant to do for you?

N: To try and engage a deeper understanding of something rather than just reading it at face value.

FJD: What was the purpose of studying it? What was the point?

Z: It gives you more understanding of why authors would do certain things in books and then you can link that to later in your life when you're reading other things. It gives you that wider understanding of what you're reading.

R: I think it opens your eyes to what texts you might enjoy in the future.

FJD: So maybe do we think it might make us a little more open minded?

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R: Mmm.

A: Yeah.

Gove's reforms connected the curriculum and the wider aspirations of society. In this discussion, Pupil Z also talked of the subject enhancing their reading in 'later life' stating that 'It gives you that wider understanding of what you're reading.' This statement suggested that reading would continue into adulthood and therefore understanding texts and the means by which to make sense of literary texts, is an important part of their education at this point in their lives. In interview Group C, Pupil T reiterated this when asked what the principle of studying English Literature might be; 'To give you a better understanding of writing and so when you're reading something you can really appreciate what it is.' This is a reference to a skill that will possibly benefit Pupil T's life beyond the English Literature class.

The study of Shakespeare's plays was a significant dislike offered by many pupils and several core texts such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* were stated as being particularly disliked. Some stated in their questionnaire responses why they disliked this aspect of the course in further detail: 'Shakespeare – it's just pointless and might as well be another language because it's not English – hard to understand'. The connection between Shakespeare's plays and the challenge of the language used was the most common reason given for the dislike of studying these texts, although some pupils also commented that the themes present in the plays were uninspiring to them; 'thought the theme was boring'.

6.3 Development

The impact that the subject had on pupils' development was also present in their responses. Many showed an awareness of their own development from studying the subject and were able to comment on this. Question 7 of the initial questionnaires asked pupils whether or not they felt that studying English Literature during their time at secondary school was, or had been, of importance to them. They were required to explain their thoughts rather than only stating yes or no, however in the first instance pupils did clearly state whether they did or did not think it was important. The findings showed that out of the 99 pupils who took part 69 said that studying English Literature is important, 25 said it is not important, and five were undecided. Question 7 did require a narrative response and allowed pupils to expand on their views as they were encouraged to justify and elaborate on their initial opinions.

Many pupils commented that the purpose of the subject aided others in their learning, 'to develop a child's English skills'. The use of the word 'skills' was a frequent one but many pupils did seek to further expand this idea and made links to understanding about famous writers, developing analytical skills, discussion skills and widening their imagination. Pupils also wrote about the increase in emotional understanding as a purpose or benefit of studying English Literature in secondary schools. This connects to a 'personal growth' view of the study of English in schools, also evident in Cox's Report (1989). Chambers and Gregory (2006) noted that the personal growth view and its links to widening the imagination of pupils creates a link

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between the principles of teaching and learning about Literature and the lives of human beings. Some pupils expanded their views and the link to personal growth: ‘...also its purpose is to help students to realise other people have the same feelings and emotions.’ Another pupil stated, ‘it increases the student’s imagination and their own ability to write’, a response which clearly links to the creative assumption of the discipline. Yet other pupils believed the subject should seek to challenge views: ‘It should challenge our thoughts and ideas, it should raise discussion and leave no question unanswered. It should bring out the best in our minds, it should teach us to accept the good and criticise the bad. It should not be about exams.’ Many pupils used the words ‘discuss’ and ‘discussion’ in their responses and others included ‘feelings’, ‘emotions’ and ‘notice’ also, key terms which tie to the overarching concept of their development and its links to the subject.

A pupil also commented on their own scrutiny of the world around them and that this had derived from their study of the English Literature: ‘It is the primary art, the methods of describing the human condition. Writing is the expression of the soul and the ability to analyse that, to perceive the inner most thoughts and feelings, morals and ethics is the most important skill.’ Carey proposed ‘It is that literature gives you ideas to think with. It stocks your mind.’ (2005: 208). Also, English Literature, as prescribed by AQA was as, ‘a chance to develop culturally and acquire knowledge of the best that has been thought and written.’ (2014: 12). The view of understanding the world was a theme repeated throughout the responses. Several pupils referred to this notion in their responses: ‘It can also help us understand the nature of humans through what has been recorded’, ‘being able to take different views’, ‘the purpose is

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to understand the world that we live in, 'understand the world we live in by looking at other meanings'.

6.4 Reading habits

The Govian curriculum model was created with the study of full, British, texts as its heart. The value of pupils studying full texts was imposed onto teachers and pupils as part of the changes to the subject of English Literature and for these pupils will have marked a significant change in how texts were presented to them by teachers. Possibly, during their Key Stage 3 study of the subject, prior to the changes to the curriculum, the teaching and learning based on extracts would have been acceptable and would have fed into the GCSE requirements at that time. Each of the four interview groups discussed the inclusion of set texts within the discipline. Group D focused on the length of these texts and the quantity of reading:

FJD: Ok, interesting points. A time when you've disliked it then? What could we get rid of, what could we change?

I: Having to remember it all so specifically.

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W: I don't like the fact that in our controlled assessment we wrote essays on "Romeo and Juliet" and "Jane Eyre" yet the majority of the class haven't even read the books.

A: Yeah [laughs]

W: Because you get so bogged down in the detail you don't look at the thing as a whole and therefore they don't enjoy it. You've got to have actually read the books to enjoy it and to realise why you're doing English Literature.

A: Yeah.

FJD: I suppose that raises an important issue in terms of studying a whole text or looking at individual sections or maybe watching the film. So other groups have said oh no we want to keep the films as they're really important. Do you think that would be important to look at a full text? Or do you think looking at something like "Jane Eyre" and all of that would put some students off?

A: Well honestly it's better than rather you're left half empty because when, well especially when you do your coursework you need yes to look at the individual sections but then you need to talk about the book as a whole. But you really had to generalise if you hadn't really read it which meant that most of us hadn't. So basically we just went off what we'd seen on the screen, because we never actually finished going through it and analysing it in class. I

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actually think we stopped quite a few chapters before the end and then just did it from there.

Pupil W showed awareness and concern regarding the lack of whole texts which had been studied by the class: 'I don't like the fact that in our controlled assessment we wrote essays on *Romeo and Juliet* and *Jane Eyre* yet the majority of the class haven't even read the books.' Other pupils in this interview appeared to agree with Pupil W. Pupil W made the connection between their engagement with the subject and the reading of whole texts: 'you get so bogged down in the detail you don't look at the thing as a whole and therefore they don't enjoy it. You've got to have actually read the books to enjoy it and to realise why you're doing English Literature.' Being 'left half empty' was certainly a key concern for them and they all showed appreciation for literary texts in their entirety. This raised wider issues about the inclusion of lengthier texts within the subject as it appears that even if a longer text has been selected for study, in their case this text was *Jane Eyre*, pupils value knowing the whole text and maybe do not need teachers to over simplify it for them by cutting out the parts which they believe are not needed. Statements such as these made by the participants in Group D arguably are in support of the discipline of Literature becoming more challenging as more complex.

Pupils also made reference to the assumptions about their reading habits through the choices of texts studied in the classroom:

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M: Oh yeah, reading is good.

L: Yeah.

FJD: So the reading side of it yeah? Is there anything in particular that you've read or you've studying that you think, you know, that was really good and that should be continued on or other years should study that?

T: I don't know. I just know I do like it when they choose a book to do that I've already read so I have |

M: [[laughs]

T: | And it's going yeah I know what this is about.

C: Well I like reading a book you haven't read as then you get to learn and it's not boring looking at something that you've not done.

There was greater positivity when discussing the reading of set texts with their peers than there had been previously on the questionnaires, although pupils during the discussions did expand on their ideas as with this discussion of texts that may have been previously read by pupils. The assumption from the curriculum is that the literary texts studied at Key Stage 4 level will be new to pupils. Pupils C hints that they may have read some of the texts and there may be some overlap: 'Well I like

reading a book you haven't read as then you get to learn and it's not boring looking at something that you've not done.'

6.5 Criticisms

When discussing the subject, conversations also led to what pupils' did not like about the subject. Dislikes are also important for gaining a full picture of what these pupils thought about English Literature. In line with the school-based research conducted by Keys and Fernandes (1993), questions requiring both likes and dislikes were included in the questionnaire and follow-up group interview phase of this research. To ask for likes without dislikes I feel would be leading and unhelpful in the pursuit of gaining an overall, fair picture of what these 15-16 year old pupils think.

Question 6 of the questionnaire specifically asked pupils to describe moments when they had disliked English Literature. The question required pupils to place their dislikes within the context of the teaching and learning which takes place, rather than presenting dislikes, or indeed likes, as being separate from the 'real' classroom experience of the subject. Some opposition towards the subject was present in the findings. Just as some pupils liked the texts, others disagreed and felt that reading texts was not an enjoyable part of the course.

The majority of pupils focused their responses on their studies of English Literature in Year 11, focusing on the study of the GCSE course and their controlled

assessment tasks. There were three key emergent codes from the data which highlighted three key dislikes. These were 'repetition' to denote tasks which pupils found 'boring' and 'repetitive' to include tasks that 'drag on'. Also, 'essays' which referred to any structured writing tasks included exam preparation essays, timed pieces and controlled assessment essays. Some pupils focused on general topic areas including 'Shakespeare' and 'Poetry' as evidence of their dislikes of the subject. One pupil did not answer this question, the remaining 98 pupils all wrote a response in the blank space.

The most common disliked theme referred to by pupils was that of 'repetition' with 30 pupils making reference to this within their response to question 6. Many commented that such repetition was largely linked to 'annotating' as one pupil stated 'annotating poems all lesson and not understanding what I am annotating'. Another pupil commented on the fast pace of lessons which may be suggestive of the vast number of poems and texts being studied, 'it is difficult to catch up'. The study of poetry was certainly a sticking point in responses to this question with several respondents stating they were studying or had studied 'poem after poem' and others stating 'analysing poem after poem and doing the same activity again and again, when the poems are not even that different'.

For those who commented on not liking certain experiences, the study of long texts were also noted as being a dislikeable and repetitive aspect of the course: 'I dislike *Jane Eyre* because it was very long and tedious'. Other pupils commented that the same skill set was constantly required: 'having to remember the key quotes and analysing them in detail'. Many other pupils commented that essays were the most

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dislikeable part of the subject: 'I dislike writing about a text that is hard to analyse, I dislike writing answers to exam style questions'. References were made by many respondents to the 'controlled assessment' aspect of their course, which has (since removed from the GCSE courses by the reforms to the curriculum from 2015).

Although for these groups of pupils certain topics within the English Literature course were deemed enjoyable and contributed to the overall liking of the subject, the ultimate outcome of a written piece of work was less inspiring. Some pupils linked their dislike of essays and writing to the negative outcome it can produce for them and the feelings of failure it can invoke: 'doing terrible in my mock exams'. This shows how these pupils tie the tasks within the discipline to their emotions. Other pupils here turned this perceived negative task of essay writing into a positive and something which can be overcome if they try: 'I disliked preparing and completing the essay tasks, however, over time this eventually became easier'. The shift to the Goveian reforms arguably marked a change in the level of challenge present in the GCSE English Literature curriculum. The debate regarding raising standards of education had continued since the New Labour reforms however, Gove's standards were connected to challenging literary texts which in turn had resulted in more challenging critical essays required from these pupils.

6.6 Pupil choice

Discussions and questionnaire responses also connected to the themes of purpose and choice. It was evident during discussion that pupils gained confidence and empowerment as they explained their views. I consider both the theme of purpose and choice together in this section. 21 pupils did give open responses stating that the purpose of studying the subject of English Literature was to gain the qualification and that was the main purpose of their lessons.

The context of their final year in secondary school is of significance in understanding this theme. It is likely that finishing school was at the forefront of many of their thoughts. Some pupils were frank in their references here: 'to gain an extra GCSE' and 'to get another GCSE which can help later in life'. Possibly, the responses may have been suggestive of a lack of interest in the subject, that the discipline has little or no purpose to these students other than 'to get a better job'. The contextual setting of the school was of significance here as many of these pupils referenced high achievement and university, concepts endorsed within the culture of this high performing secondary school. Some referenced university and others were specific as to the type of university that they felt studying Literature would help them gain a place in these institutions: 'not a clue other than to look good on an entry for getting into a Russell Group university', 'it looks good and may open the views of college placements'. The notion that, as a subject listed on their final results certificates, it 'looks good' connects to an acknowledgement that this subject does hold importance when compared to other subjects.

The theme of choice was also clearly relevant to these pupils. Despite the subject being a core subject currently, at the time of data collection in 2015 the subject had been given option status. These pupils would have been aware that they were studying English Literature but others in their year group were not. Thus, the perception of English Literature as a potential option subject for these pupils was also evidenced in responses here. From those pupils who stated the purpose of studying the discipline was to get the GCSE or a job, many stated that it was a good additional subject. Some stated 'you get an extra GCSE' and 'it gives you an extra GCSE'. Others extended this idea, 'to get another GCSE which can help in later life' and 'to get another GCSE because that's all people care about, so you have more chance to go to University and Colleges'.

Pupils also made the connection between gaining the qualification of GCSE English Literature and positive outcomes, 'to get another GCSE, to get a better job'. This raises the idea that maybe the subject of English Literature at Key Stage 4 level could be connected more to 'real' jobs and further education college courses. The scope for looking outward from the subject at a school-based level would engage pupils such as these who took part in this research. Within higher education, the subjects which are studied are often connected to potential careers and earning potential. In secondary schools today, maybe inspiration should be taken from universities and subjects such as English Literature should be given 'real-world' significance to its pupils.

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Pupils in interview group D discussed whether or not they should be given the option to study the subject of English Literature. As a group, they were the most fluent and wide ranging in the topics they drew into their group discussion. They addressed the issue of pupils being forced to study a subject which could be viewed as an optional choice:

FJD: So that's interesting in terms of your attitude towards it. Do we think it's, I don't know, important to study it?

I: I think you should get the option.

A: Yeah.

FJD: So you could opt in or opt out?

A: I know a lot of people would prefer to do it over language or just do language lower down. |

M: | Or not do them in the same year.

A: Yeah! I mean we could have done one last year and another one this year couldn't we.

M: Or just not do it at all. That would be alright. Don't mind that.

W: Well with making it more of an option you'd get some people and brighter students who really should be doing it but just don't do it anymore. So they might think oh, we'll do something else that's easier and then they won't do it.

Pupil I immediately states that they should be granted a choice as to whether or not they should study English Literature. Their discussion moved on to focus on both English Language and English Literature and how these subjects could be split as Pupil A stated 'we could have done one last year and another this year couldn't we.' One can assume such conversations are reflected in English departments around the country as teachers too battle with the planning and splitting of these two different disciplines which must essentially be brought and taught together. Pupil W commented that 'brighter students' should really be studying English Literature but may instead opt for 'something else that's easier'. The assumption that can be drawn from Pupil W's response is that the subject can be viewed as challenging and not an easy option for pupils.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings in relation to wider views and models of English Literature. This chapter has incorporate the voices of pupils extensively throughout as this research seeks to present their views about their experienced

curriculum. Of course, these pupils' experiences are that of a Goveian curriculum ideology. The pupils were interviewed and completed questionnaires in the spring of 2015 following the first wave of curriculum changes. They are a product of this new curriculum and the new ideologies presented within it. However, as outlined in the literature review, Gove's changes reflected upon and showed connection to prior models of English, most notably the broad range of 'needs' that Cox proposed and the skills for practical purposes emphasises under New Labour.

Pupils gave their opinions on the set texts and stated their personal dislikes which included too much repetition within the subject and that Shakespeare and poetry were sometimes lacking in perceived enjoyment and value. The questionnaire data found that these pupils did feel that studying English Literature had the purpose of helping them to improve their wider language skills. Pupils also stated that the subject had a purpose of allowing children to discover new books. The pupils stated that the subject is meant to enhance their understanding of texts and is meant to encourage reading. Their comments linked to the perception of the subject as a valuable arts-based subject (Carey, 2005). They did give comments that showed they had genuine appreciate for some aspects of the subject, views that clearly link to the Goveian ideology of enhancing appreciation for literature and culture. A large focus on this chapter rested on the theme of 'engagement' and pupils were genuinely engaged with the subject. They gave clear opinions and could debate the value of studying poetry, prose and Shakespeare.

The follow-up small group interviews had the aim of expanding the initial views raised in the questionnaire data. Pupils from these interview groups presented and

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discussed their wider concerns regarding whether or not they should be given the option to study English Literature and their views were considered in relation to ideologies of the subject. Pupils explained the benefits of being required to study English Literature throughout their time in secondary education and many of their views connected back to the views of English proposed by the Coxian model, including the link to their development and needs as young people.

Pupils discussed the inclusion of full texts within the English Literature curriculum. Some pupils claimed that the majority of pupils had not read the full literary texts required as part of their GCSE, yet they had produced pieces of written work, namely their controlled assessment critical essays, without knowledge of the full text. It seemed that with Gove's changes still relatively new, that teaching methods were still adhering to the study of extracts rather than always tackling full texts. The notion of the English literary heritage was also discussed. Pupils made the cultural connection between themselves as British people and the requirement and expectation to study British writers such as William Shakespeare. These pupils understood that British writers had importance to them as British people.

Pupils also give criticisms of the subject and connected criticisms to the view that they should be given a choice about English Literature. A choice whether or not to study the subject has since been removed from schools also. Under the current arrangements, all pupils must study both English Language and English Literature. These pupils were acutely aware that not everyone in their year group was studying the subject at the time this research took place.

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The next chapter will continue to discuss the findings from this research and the information presented in this chapter. It will draw together conclusion from this research and will make final recommendations. It will also comment on the contribution of this research and possible areas for further research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions, Contributions and Recommendations for Future Research

7.1 Introduction

This research began for me as an English teacher working in a comprehensive secondary-school and teaching GCSE English Literature. Over my past ten years as a teacher I have encountered a variety of different attitudes towards the subject that I teach and many of these have been negative and conflicting in their reasoning.

Teaching in a semi-rural school, many pupils have a desire to pursue vocational jobs such as farming yet day after day I teach them the range of poetry, prose, drama (and Shakespeare) that the curriculum demands. Questions of relevance and wider importance have been present in my career since my initial teacher training days. As an arts-based subject, I feel that English Literature needs to command its place in secondary education better.

I began this research with a broad consideration of my questions in mind. My initial starting point was triggered by Michael Gove's, the past Secretary for Education, 2010 speech about the state of English in our secondary schools. His words at the time did not inspire me as a secondary school teacher nor did they enthuse me as he placed his harsh critique on the teaching profession however, his sentiment regarding the teaching and learning of English Literature and great works of British Literature did inspire me to begin on this research route. Gove spoke of 'birthrights'

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and claimed that British literature was among the best in the world and should be more prevalent in GCSE English Literature (2010, 2013). As a high school English teacher, it made me question my own discipline and the point and purpose of the subject in today's modern curriculum yet on the other hand it made me feel proud to be British and of the contribution our country had made to Literature and the arts. During my time as a trainee teacher my cohort and I were specifically prepared on how to defend our chosen subject to pupils and parents who would likely question its purpose. My teacher training began with the proposals of Kingman (1988) and Cox (1989) and the view that these were the seminal moments that established the subject we know today. As aspiring teachers, we were encouraged to know Cox's five views of English and be aware that what we were teaching in the classroom still had connections to them yet these ideas seemed rather distant to the lived experience of the classroom. Added to this was the critique that English Literature faced when Gove announced his changes to the curriculum.

Following the pilot study, it became apparent that both teachers and pupils had views and experiences which could shape the identity of the subject. The pupils who took part in the pilot discussions were enthused and engaged with the process of being asked their 'pupil voice'. Their comments presented a picture of the subject from a different perspective, a viewpoint which I found to be absent from the research and literature in this area. Much of the literature into schools and curriculum reforms take into account only what adults and academics say, rather than children. Working with young people in my career makes me appreciate that secondary-school pupils are so often astute, articulate and enthusiastic about their views and beliefs. Teaching in a school which always refers back to new Ofsted requirements

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and new political reforms I am aware of the developing impact that the pupil voice has. Pupils now take part in interview days and are asked their opinions on prospective candidates. Pupils complete rating forms on their teachers and fill in questionnaires on their school subjects which help inform policy making within the school. There is therefore a prevailing awareness that the voice of learners should be heard and I wholeheartedly support that.

This research has sought to explore the views of GCSE pupils towards their current English Literature curriculum with reference to particular political changes and perspectives that have impacted on the curriculum in secondary education. This research focused on one school in Staffordshire. The school was a mixed-gender, comprehensive academy converter situated in an area of declining economic deprivation. The school was one that performs well when compared to schools locally and the ethos rested on formal approaches to behaviour and the curriculum. It is the school that I teach at and, although I was not the teacher for any of the pupils who took part in this research, I was fully aware of the changes to the place of English Literature in the school over the past ten years. The research took place when only a few classes were singled out to study the subject. The findings were detailed and exposed debates, disagreements and some consensus about individual aspects of the GCSE English Literature curriculum as experienced by these pupils.

The research questions were as follows:

- How do pupils construct English Literature in the secondary-school classroom?
- In what ways do pupils view their experienced English Literature curriculum?
- How do their views accord to different models of English Literature?

This final chapter now brings together the views of the pupils at School P who kindly took part in this research. It refers to the views of the pupils and makes 'real' connections between their voices and the curriculum. This chapter presents the reader with conclusions that can be drawn from this research investigation and the information presented in the three findings chapters. It makes connections between the constructions and experiences of these pupils and past models of English Literature resulting in an understanding of what these pupils want from *their* curriculum. This chapter offers some conclusions in terms of pedagogy and practice within the discipline. It also explains the contribution of this case study to the field of secondary school research and makes suggestions for further future research. Unless otherwise stated, the quotations used in this chapter are direct quotations from the pupils themselves.

7.2 How do pupils construct English Literature in the secondary-school classroom?

The literature review evidenced that the subject of English Literature formed on uneasy ground. The history and development of English Literature as a secondary education subject began in the early 1900s. The then Board of Education sought to establish it as a subject focused on societal values and culture. More recently, pupils are guided to read a wide range of British literary texts, show appreciation and the ability to make connections between what they read and their lives. To be critical of literary texts is also an important part of the discipline and they should, we are told, be able to write in an analytical way.

The Department for Education's (2013) teaching curriculum gave the following essential aims for the GCSE English Literature that the pupils in this research were engaged in:

- Read a wide range of classic literature fluently and with good understanding, and make connections across their reading
- Read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often
- Appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage

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- Write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English
- Acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including the grammatical terminology and other literary and linguistic terms they need to criticise and analyse what they read. (3)

The current curriculum states that pupils are required to show appreciation for literary texts and for the 'English literary heritage'. I argue that this is part of Gove's Conservative restoration of the discipline and centred on his personal ideology of what appropriate texts are and what a good education is. This research, whilst acknowledging the prescribed views about what English Literature is supposed to be within the curriculum, is concerned with the voices of pupils learning the subject at the time of this investigation.

Pupils were asked to give their own definitions of what English Literature is. The reasoning behind this was to collate the ideas, examine them and work towards a pupil-centred view of the identity of the subject. All 99 pupils who took part this research offered a personal opinion of their own construction of what English Literature was, as informed by their learning experiences at the school.

Skills were a significant part of pupils' constructions of their experienced English Literature curriculum. Pupils made direct reference to skills that were: analytical, language skills and understanding. The key skill of 'analysis' was identified in the majority of pupil's definitions of the subject. Few pupils went on to expand what it

meant in the wider constructs of their lessons but there was a common understanding established between the pupils that they were aware of 'analysis' and of its importance. The findings show that the term 'analysis' along with derivatives of the term such as 'analyse' and 'analysing' were extremely important to pupils and these terms were closely connected to what they believed is a definition of English Literature. The term proved itself to be a powerful and emotive word used by almost all pupils at some point during this research. The act of critically analysing and pulling apart literary texts is a central, important and defining aspect of the current English Literature discipline in secondary education today. This skill marked a significant connection between the construction formulated by these pupils and the wider policy constructions.

Language skills were referred to frequently and the skill of being able to select key words and techniques from a text was viewed as significant. Pupils also stated that wider-understanding skills may have helped them in other school subjects and in their own development. Overall, 'skills' were presented as positive aspects of the subject. Pupils' awareness of a need to obtain good grades in their exams and believed they could if they harness these 'skills'. There was a shared culture of progress and the need for achievement through a shared experience of the subject.

Pupils did view 'books' and 'reading' to be defining constructs. The literature review pointed to the assumed importance of heritage and history within the subject of English Literature (Yandell, 1997, Coles, 2013, Gove, 2013) and the 2013 curriculum overview of the subject from the DfE includes references to classic texts and appreciating our literary heritage. Some pupils made it clear that the texts were

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impactful for them: 'the development of understanding of our literary heritage'. A widespread appreciation of texts was not expressed as pupils sought to define the subject but many did include the titles of texts they had studied. Notions of tradition were found to be of importance. The shaping of pupils' identities was also shown to be a product of their experiences when studying the subject. The texts they had studied sparked discussions and shared analysis. Pupils associated their positioning within the discipline with characteristics including 'confidence' and 'maturity', suggesting the discipline had been of benefit to them.

The processes of 'understanding' and 'interpreting' were thought to be central to what English Literature is. Pupils' experiences of their English Literature lessons showed a genuine awareness of a shared learning experience that often focused on the study of texts. Other students recognised that the texts brought classes together. In what seems like a frequently changing curriculum, the use of modern media and performance was viewed by pupils as beneficial. It offered an inclusive experience for them and some felt it was a defining aspect of the subject for them.

7.3 In what ways do pupils view their experienced English Literature curriculum?

In spite of the political rhetoric that the English Literature should connect to the adult lives of pupils, patterns emerged in this research that showed pupils do not collectively support this view. There was a relationship between the subject and

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passing the GCSE exam which in turn connected to future employment and/or a place in further education. However, pupils struggled to express the between the subject and their futures.

Pupils' experiences showed a sharing of the learning experience was common and this shared experience often focused on the study of texts. Others acknowledged that literary texts brought their class together and allowed for a shared learning experience. The shaping of their identities was shown to be a product of their experiences when studying the subject. The texts sparked discussions and analytical debates. Pupils stated the subject have given them 'confidence' and 'maturity'.

The skills they honed within the subject were significant parts of their experiences. These skills were: analytical, language and understanding. Analytical skills were widespread skills attributable to the subject and well respected by these pupils. Many felt that the skills of analysis supported them in other subjects and helped them in their lives beyond the subject. The findings establish the process of 'analysis' as highly significant for almost all pupils who took part in either phase of the research. Some struggled to define it, but others did explain the term presenting it as an exploration of texts and the hunt for 'deeper meanings'. Language skills were mentioned repeatedly and being able to 'pick out' key bits of information was deemed significant. There was a shared understanding of the value of the skills they had gained and how these may help them in their development. In the most part, the 'skills' were believed to be positive aspects of the subject. Skills including 'analysis' are entrenched with the rhetoric of the subject, and are therefore important at a policy and classroom level. There was a shared culture of progression through a shared experience of the subject.

7.4 How do their views accord to different models of English Literature?

The overwhelming majority of pupils stated that 'yes' it is important for young people to study English Literature. The pupils' experiences as presented in this research are that of a Goveian curriculum ideology. The pupils who took part in this 2015 research and shared their experiences with me were in the spring term of their final year, following the first wave of curriculum changes. They are a product of this new curriculum. However, Gove's changes did reflected on and show connection to preceding models of English, including awareness of Cox's broad range of views and 'needs' and more functional writing skills needed for employment endorsed under New Labour.

Pupils gave their dislikes which included repetition within the subject and that Shakespeare and poetry were, to them, lacking in wider value. Pupils felt that the subject of English Literature was overshadowed somewhat by its repetitive nature. Large amounts of annotating and repeating the same tasks but with different texts, that is to say a different poem or different page of a novel, were deemed to be significant dislikes of their current curriculum model. This undermined the overall importance of studying the subject for these pupils. Pupils did feel that studying English Literature had the purpose of helping them to improve their language skills.

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Pupils did give responses that showed they had genuine appreciate for some aspects of the subject, views that clearly link to the Goveian ideology of enhancing appreciation for literature. They gave clear opinions and could discuss the worth of studying poetry, prose and Shakespeare. Pupils explained the benefits of being required to study English Literature and their ideas related to the views of English proposed by the Coxian model, including the link to their advancement and needs as children. Pupils made links to the background of substantial texts and links to society and culture was also deemed as enjoyable and of worth to pupils. The notion of the English literary heritage was discussed and pupils could make connections between themselves as British children and the expectation to study British writers. These pupils understood that British writers were importance to them. Pupils spoke of importance, greatness, 'honour' and 'heritage' when expressing their views regarding the learning of Literature. Such ideas link to Gove's (2010) talk of 'birthrights' and clearly these pupils also feel that it is a privilege, at times, to be allowed to study works of literature which are deemed to be great and of significance to them. Furthermore, the discovery of new books as an importance of studying English Literature was expressed. The findings demonstrate that pupils did make a connection between them studying the subject and the enhancement in their imagination and critical thinking skills. Much was discussed about the 'development' of skills linked to communicating with others and being creative and imaginative. Pupils were critical in relation to the subject being non-optional for them. They wanted to be given a choice about studying English Literature.

7.5 What do pupils want?

The constructions and opinions of pupils who took part in this research ultimately lead to a view of English Literature that is part of the lived experience. Pupils do want to be asked their opinions and value being part of ongoing debate. I believe they want to be given choices.

This research raises questions regarding the type of knowledge pupils in secondary school want. The findings show they want a balanced and fulfilling curriculum that keeps them engaged and allows them to thrive in modern Britain. An enriched curriculum both within and beyond the classroom with an emphasis on contextualised learning is what these pupils want.

Ahead of the new Ofsted Framework for 2019, the focus on: intent, implementation and impact are at the forefront of school and curriculum leaders' intentions. This research does not represent a one size fits all model of how GCSE English Literature should be but it does highlight from this case, the need for pupils to be listened to in relation to how they acquire knowledge, understanding and skills.

Pupils want to be prepared for their lives beyond the classroom and that must be of greater consideration by policy makers. Perhaps the use of more personalised pathways for English Literature would be of use at a school-department level. The amount of lessons devote to English Literature could also be considered in greater depth and the use of clear success criteria for pupils would aid all in the classroom, particularly those less able. I believe that pupils do want a demanding curriculum that

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challenges however, it must also be accessible for all. Cox's view of cross-curricular learning is still of value to these pupils. This, perhaps, should be implemented more between different disciplines and not held centrally within the subject through the links to the historical context of texts.

An inclusive model of English Literature which allows all pupils to achieve is what is called for following this research. A focus on literacy for life and a curriculum which equips pupils with the skills needed in their adult lives should be central to a pupil-centred model of the subject.

7.6 Concerning trends

The lack of pupil, and researcher, consensus towards the current curriculum raises a concern regarding inclusion. The findings of course showed lively debate and variation on constructions, experiences and opinions about the subject of English Literature but there were some concerning trends that are worthy of final consideration.

The pupils in this research had seen shifts in education policy during their time at secondary school. Gove's changes were implemented swiftly and I recognise from first-hand experience just how tumultuous the move to a new teaching curriculum was at that time. The school was quick to move with the changes and the pupils at

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School P were introduced to new skills and content for their GCSE courses which had largely been absent from their initial Key Stage 3 lessons.

Unlike Cox's five views which gave a broad theory about what English should be like following observations and research in schools, Gove's stance was steadfast and demanded more of pupils than ever before. New Labour justified their curriculum ideology and changes connecting skills to employment and seeking to raise standards, yet Gove's changes seemed to return to an older style of teaching and learning with talk of heritage and rights of birth. I do not see Gove as a destroyer of this current curriculum and indeed my views towards him did change over the course of this research and reviewing process, yet his changes must be questioned in terms of their actual benefit to the education of teenagers.

Although pupils in this research showed positivity and optimism for the subject, there were views shared which suggested the subject is arguably less than inclusive particularly for weaker pupils. The study of whole texts was deemed beneficial by Gove and I do support the principle of this. I reflect on my own learning as a pupil myself can clearly remember the teaching of Shakespeare through an opening extract which made little sense to me. The ending of a text was often ignored and instead a range of literary texts were touch on rather than completed by classes. Yet, for pupils who are disillusioned with school and for those who struggle to access the curriculum there is very little movement or flexibility under Gove's 'restoration'. I feel that the study of English Literature, in this sense, is most challenging as the text choices are vast and complex.

I do believe the changes and ideology behind them are based on a need for pupils to leave secondary education with a wide understanding of literary texts. Yet, the narrow focus on British writers and learning quotations and poems off by heart does seem outdated to a modern society. Pupils in this research touched on all these concerns and there were likes and dislikes in relation to experiences throughout the findings.

7.7 Recommendations and Implications for Future Research

The findings from this research contribute to the views about English Literature as a secondary school subject, as experienced at a comprehensive school in the Staffordshire Moorlands. This research, much like the pilot study that ran prior to it, exposed just how cooperative and engaging secondary school pupils are in research projects such as this. The methodology worked well and the overwhelming majority of pupils who were invited did take part and seemed to be engaged in the questionnaires and discussion groups. I sensed that some pupils during the small group discussions felt a sense of pride that they had been selected and that their views may be shaping ideas and future planning for the subject of Literature giving the research a sense of purpose for them which I had hoped for. I was pleased that the overwhelming majority of participants were fluent in their written and spoken expression and gave interesting and intriguing responses when stating their views.

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In their constructions of English Literature, pupils did adhere to some of the political rhetoric and included the wider ideas such as reading enjoyment, exposure to works of literature and being critical and creative. The notion of 'analysis' was found to be the most significant aspect of my findings as the majority of pupils claimed that the subject could be defined by 'analysis'.

School P has since continued to use their own pupil voice methods of obtaining the views of pupils. At the end of this research period, pupils at the school were asked to write down positive views of English Literature to be used in displays and publication material for the school's re-branded sixth form centre. They appeared eager to do this and many were keen to have their names shared below their views for others to see. Year 8 pupils are also being invited to give their views on text choices lower down in the school. Actions such as this highlight that pupils do gain a sense of pride when being called upon to give their views for others and it provides a sense of emancipation for young people, something that in our current political climate should not be overlooked. Further research could expand this method of pupil voice in institutions at this time of educational change and reform.

The specifics of the findings, in particular the strong feelings relating to the teaching and learning of Shakespeare and poetry sparked debate and the overall debates between pupils were in line with the literature review that concluded English Literature polarises opinion (Powell, 2014). Further research into specific areas of curricula would be of value and the more specific these are the more they could be applied to individual 'cases' such as that of School P. In particular, I feel that the firm aspect of any English Literature course – the study of works by Shakespeare –

would be worthy of further follow-up research however, I also believe that case study research such as this should be specific and be of benefit to the case in question.

7.8 Limitations and Conclusions

This study was conducted to examine the current GCSE English Literature curriculum. It sought views, constructions and experiences from pupils at the school and examined seminal moments in the development of the subject. A potential limitation of this research is that the findings are not representative of all 15-16 year old school pupils as a whole. There are however, many schools which do align themselves to School P and have a similar demographic of pupils and a similar ethos. The school is a state-funded comprehensive which demands high standards and gains good examination results. The findings obtained from the pupils at School P also are by no means exhaustive and possibly there is a potential future research opportunity building upon this investigation. Focusing on one target school of interest also presents a snapshot view of what pupils think and can be used as a springboard to conduct similar research in other schools or within a catchment area or county.

The pilot study did allow me to conduct a trial run of interview processes and to develop interview techniques. Pupils who took part in the research responded well to the tasks and I was pleased at the support provided by the school and its tutors. Bias can always be viewed as a negative overshadow when analysing qualitative data, however this investigation presents the data for the reader to refer to. (see Appendix

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8 and Appendix 9) and the findings chapters are filled with the real voices of these pupils. The responses from pupils were mostly clear and to the point with the majority of replies including key words and terms making the analysis of findings lengthy but accurate.

Despite such possible limitations I do feel that this research was worthwhile and makes an original contribution to the experienced GCSE English Literature curriculum following Gove's changes. It undoubtedly makes an original contribution to the student voice system that operates within School P and has yielded clear insight into what pupils think about the subject at a time when Literature and the number of pupils been required to take the discipline has fallen under scrutiny. My investigation has shown that there are similarities between the findings and the political rhetoric regarding English Literature. That much of the unease from the subject's original establishment within our education system is still present today and that the discipline still divides opinion. That pupils today believe in the power of critical analysis yet struggle to know what analysis *is*. That they enjoy the performance and media side of the discipline and that this is maybe underused by the subject today. That Shakespeare and poetry are still areas of contention and that pupils feel there are large aspects of the discipline which have an unclear link to their worth and value for their lives beyond school, raising questions of just how inclusion (or not) this curriculum is. All of which is conceivably an original contribution which can inform curriculum policy making and provide a starting point for further research into English Literature curriculum content and teaching methods in the subject today. All of which can help develop the subject and help move learning forward.

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Appendix 1 - Information Sheet

Study Title: Secondary School Pupils and English Literature

Aims of the Research

The aim of this research is to investigate what pupils think about the subject of English Literature at your school.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in the research: Secondary School Pupils and English Literature.

Before you decide whether or not you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives. You can take home this information sheet, a consent form, a parent/guardian information sheet and an invitation letter. You have three days to decide. You do not have to take part. Please ask me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Your Headteacher supports this research.

Why have I been chosen?

The research is focused on the thoughts of students at your school; therefore, you are very important to this research.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not.

If you do decide to take part you will be asked to read and sign a consent form.

You can withdraw at any time and I won't mind.

What will happen if I take part?

Firstly, you will be asked to read and sign the consent form, read the invitation letter and this information sheet. You will also be given information to take home to your parents/guardians.

You will be allowed to take them home with you and share them with your family.

You have three days to consider if you would like to take part.

If you do want to take part, you will complete a double-sided questionnaire during morning Emmaus time. If you do not take part, you do not have to complete it, instead you can continue with your Emmaus worksheets.

I am interested in what you think about English Literature. Therefore, if your responses indicate that you have more to say about the subject or interesting thoughts about it, you may be invited to a small focus group to discuss them further.

Again, you will be invited and do not have to accept. You can discuss it with your family before accepting. You will be given a further consent form to sign.

Then, in small groups, you will discuss with others, from your Year group, your thoughts.

The discussion will be recorded and I will be present.

Focus groups will take place in the meeting room at the school.

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If I take part, what do I have to do?

You will complete the questionnaire. You do not need to write your name on.

You may also be invited later to take part in a group discussion.

I will be present with you and you will discuss the questionnaire questions with others from Year 11.

This discussion will be recorded; however, your names will not be included in the discussion transcripts.

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?

The benefits of taking part are that you will be contributing to current educational research in this area. The findings from this research may be of use to your school and, therefore, you may well have an impact on English Literature in your school.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?

The risks of the interview-based research and filling in a questionnaire are minimal. If you feel uncomfortable at any time when discussing/writing your views then please indicate and you can stop.

How will information about me be used?

The data will be written up and used to form part of research into the thoughts of current pupils about English Literature.

Who will have access to information about me?

Your questionnaire will be held securely and will not be looked at by anyone at the school. The audio recorded data and subsequent transcripts will be kept securely by the researcher, Fiona Dutton, on a password protected computer away from the school.

I do, however, have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, abuse either to yourself or another (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Fiona Dutton on f.j.dutton@ippm.keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact Dr John Howlett on j.howlett@keele.ac.uk

You can also speak to your Headteacher if you have any concerns.

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton

Research Governance Officer

Research & Enterprise Services

Dorothy Hodgkin Building

Keele University

Fiona Jane Dutton

ST5 5BG

E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk

Tel: 01782 733306

Contact for further information

Miss F J Dutton

f.j.dutton@ippm.keele.ac.uk

Fiona Jane Dutton

Appendix 2 - Letter of Invitation

Study Title: Secondary School Pupils and English Literature

Dear Student,

My name is Miss Fiona Dutton and I am carrying out research into the current views and thoughts of students towards the subject of English Literature.

You are invited to take part in this research at your school.

The research will take place during the school day. It will not interfere with your lesson time.

The research will be in the form of a questionnaire and small group discussions.

The questionnaires are about English Literature and what you think about the subject. Please be honest. Your names will not be used and your questionnaire responses will not be shared with anyone at the school.

You may be invited to take part in a small group discussion to discuss your questionnaire responses in further detail. These discussions will be recorded, however the recordings will not be shared with anyone at this school and your names will not be used in the transcripts.

You can change your mind about taking part at any time without giving a reason. There are NO RISKS and you can withdraw at any time and I won't mind. You will not be in trouble for withdrawing.

The things you tell me about English Literature will help me to understand more about the subject from your perspective. There are no right or wrong answers. I just want to know your thoughts.

Regards,

Miss Fiona Dutton

f.j.dutton@ippm.keele.ac.uk

Appendix 3 - Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Study Title: Secondary School Pupils and English Literature

Aims of the Research

The aim of this research is to investigate what pupils think about current views towards the subject of English Literature at your school. This research hopes to gain an insight into the views of secondary school pupils towards English Literature.

Invitation

Your son/daughter has been invited to consider taking part in this research through the completion of a questionnaire during morning Emmaus time. He/she may also be invited to attend a small focus group to discuss his/her views with fellow pupils.

This research is being organised and conducted by Miss Fiona Dutton as part of Doctorate in Education programme at Keele University.

Before you decide whether or not you wish your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully. Please feel free to contact me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why has my son/daughter been chosen?

The study seeks the views of pupils in Year 11. Your head teacher has given me permission to contact you because you are the parent of a child in this Year at the school.

Does my son/daughter have to take part?

No. They are free to decide whether they wish to take part or not.

If they do decide to take part they will be asked to read and sign a consent form.

They can withdraw at any time and I won't mind.

What will happen if my son/daughter takes part?

Firstly, they will be asked to read and sign the consent form, the invitation letter and an information sheet.

They will be allowed to take them home and share them with you.

If they do want to take part and you support this, they will complete a double-sided questionnaire during morning Emmaus time.

I am interested in what your son/daughter thinks about English Literature. Therefore they may be invited to a small focus group to discuss their thoughts further. This will take place during a lunchtime session in the school's meeting room.

Again, they will be invited and do not have to accept. There will be given a further consent form to sign.

The discussion will be recorded and I will be present but all data will be confidential and no names will be included in this study.

If my son/daughter takes part, what do they have to do?

Fiona Jane Dutton

They will complete a questionnaire during Emmaus time.

They may be selected to attend a focus group discussion with others from Year 11 to discuss and debate their thoughts with each other.

What are the benefits (if any) of my son/daughter taking part?

The benefits of taking part are that they will be contributing to current educational research in this area. The findings from this research may be of use to the school and English department and, therefore, they may well have a direct impact on future debates surrounding the subject of English Literature in the school.

The Headteacher at the school fully supports this research.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?

The risks of the interview-based research are minimal. If they feel uncomfortable at any time when discussing their views then the discussions will stop.

How will information about me be used?

The data will be transcribed and used to form part of research into the thoughts of current pupils about English Literature.

Who will have access to information about me?

Any focus groups/interviews conducted will be taped using a digital voice recorder and transcribed by me. All of the data collected will be anonymised so that no participants (including the school and also the individuals who take part) will be identifiable. Nobody will have access to the digital data or the questionnaires except for myself. The data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) on my own computer which is password protected, and will be kept until the study has been completed. Once the research has been written up, all recordings and files will be deleted.

The anonymised transcripts and questionnaires will be stored with me during the research period in a locked filing cabinet. After the study has been completed, the transcripts of the recordings, consent forms and questionnaires will be destroyed.

As soon as they are completed, the consent forms will be kept separately from both the transcripts and recordings, so that names of participants are not held with the resulting anonymised data.

I do, however, have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Fiona Dutton on f.j.dutton@jppm.keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact Dr John Howlett on j.howlett@keele.ac.uk

Fiona Jane Dutton

You may wish to contact the Headteacher at the school. Contact details can be found on the school's website, on the school calendar and in your son/daughter's journal (page 1).

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton
Research Governance Officer
Research & Enterprise Services
Dorothy Hodgkin Building
Keele University
ST5 5BG
E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733306

Contact for further information

Miss F J Dutton
f.j.dutton@ippm.keele.ac.uk

Appendix 4 - CONSENT FORM 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of Project: Secondary School Pupils and English Literature

- 1 I have read and understand the information sheet and have had an opportunity to ask questions.

- 2 I understand that I do not have to take part and that I can withdraw at any time.

- 3 I understand that my questionnaire responses will be kept anonymous.

- 4 I agree for any quotes to be used.

- 5 I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant

Signature

Researcher

Signature

CONSENT FORM 2: FOCUS GROUP

Title of Project: Secondary School Pupils and English Literature

- 1 I agree to the focus group being audio recorded.

- 2 I understand that my responses will be confidential.

- 3 I agree for any quotes to be used.

- 4 I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant

Signature

Researcher

Signature

Fiona Jane Dutton

Appendix 5 – Head teacher’s Consent

From: Miss F. Dutton
To: Mr S. Bell
Subject: EdD

Mr Bell,

As you know, part of my EdD at Keele University is to ask students what they think about Literature as a subject.

For this I am hoping to give out some questionnaires and interview some small groups of KS4 students. The questions and discussions will not be about the school but are focused on the subject of Literature.

This is the same as the research I carried out a few years ago.

Students will be given a consent form to sign so they can opt out if they wish.

With your permission I would again like to conduct some small group interviews with students.

This would in no way interfere with lesson time.

Kind regards,

Fiona

Miss F J Dutton
Teacher of English

No problem.

Kind regards,

Steve

Appendix 6 – Ethical Review Panel

Application Form (Staff and PGR Students)

- To be completed for every research project involving human participants/subjects;
- The form must be authorised by your Research Institute Director / (or for applicants who are members of RI Social Sciences the application can be signed off by your Research Centre Head)/Supervisor /Head of School as appropriate
- Both an electronic copy & hard copy of all documentation must be provided.

APPROVAL MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

Information regarding the completion of the ethical review panel application form:

Section A – To be completed by all applicants.

Section B – To be completed by applicants who have already obtained Ethics Approval from a separate committee.

Section C – To be completed by applicants requiring approval from a University Ethical Review Panel

Section D – To be completed by all applicants.

Further information regarding the completion of the application can be found in Section E (at the end of this document)

SECTION A (to be completed by all applicants)

Project Title:	Secondary School Pupils and English Literature
Proposed start date:	July 2014
Proposed end date for 'field work' (eg interviews):	December 2014
Name of Researcher (applicant):	Fiona Jane Dutton
Status:	POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT
Research Institute or School if not in an Research Institute	Research Institute for Public Policy and Management
Keele Email address:	f.j.dutton@ippm.keele.ac.uk
Correspondence address:	7 Redbridge Close, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 8UP
Keele Telephone number:	01782 734151 07929 788098 (Mobile)

SECTION B (to be completed by applicants who have already obtained ethics approval from a separate committee)

Fiona Jane Dutton

<p>Has your project already been approved by an ethics committee? (for example, an NHS research ethics committee)</p> <p>If YES the following documentation should be sent directly to the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee, C/O Nicola Leighton, University Research Ethics Committee Administrator, Research & Enterprise Services, Dorothy Hodgkin Building, e-mail n.leighton@keele.ac.uk, telephone 01782 733306</p>	NO	
<p>A completed and signed hard copy of this application form (please complete Sections A, B and D) and an electronic copy should also be e-mailed to n.leighton@keele.ac.uk</p>	Signed hard copy:	YES
	Electronic copy:	YES
Evidence of prior ethics approval from the hosting institution.	Copy of approval document:	NO

SECTION C (to be completed by applicants who have NOT already obtained ethics approval from a separate committee)

<p>If your project requires approval by a University Ethical Review Panel (ERP).</p> <p>The following documentation should be forwarded to Nicola Leighton, Research & Enterprise Services, Dorothy Hodgkin Building, telephone 01782 733306. An electronic copy of the application form and all necessary documentation should also be e-mailed to uso.erps@keele.ac.uk An application cannot be considered until a signed copy is received and accompanied by an electronic copy.</p>		
<p>A completed and signed hard copy of this application form (please complete Sections A, C and D) and an electronic copy should also be e-mailed to uso.erps@keele.ac.uk</p>	Signed copy attached:	YES
	Electronic copy:	YES
<p>A hard copy of the summarised project proposal attached to this form, NO MORE THAN two sides of A4</p> <p>It may help the review of your project if you include a diagram to clearly explain the project (eg what activities will undertaken, by whom and when)</p> <p>An electronic copy of the summarised project proposal</p> <p>Please ensure that the version number and date is clearly stated in footer of the proposal (approval may be delayed if these details are not included)</p>	YES	
	YES	
<p><i>And, if (and only if) they are appropriate given the study's design and approaches;</i></p>		

<p>A letter of invitation for participants</p> <p>Please ensure that the version number and date is clearly stated in the footer of the letter (approval may be delayed if these details are not included)</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>An information sheet which should normally include the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why the participant has been chosen; ○ What will happen to participants if they take part ○ A discussion of the possible disadvantages, risks and benefits of taking part ○ The procedures for ensuring confidentiality and anonymity (if appropriate) ○ The proposed use of the research findings ○ Contact details of the principal investigator plus details of additional support agencies (if Necessary) ○ Version number and date is clearly stated in the footer of the information sheet (approval may be delayed if these details are not included) <p>A template for a participant information sheet is available from the Research & Enterprise Services website via the following link</p> <p>http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchgovernance/researchethics/</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>A copy of the participant consent form/s;</p> <p>Please ensure that the version number and date is clearly stated in the footer of the consent form (approval may be delayed if these details are not included)</p> <p>Templates for consent forms are available from the Research & Enterprise Services website via the following link http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchgovernance/researchethics/</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>Copies of any questionnaire, interview schedules or topic guides.</p> <p>Please ensure that the version number and date is clearly stated in the footer of these documents (approval may be delayed if these details are not included)</p>	<p>YES</p>

(PARTICIPANTS' CONSENTS)

<p>1. Will the researchers inform participants of all aspects of the research that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate and in particular, any negative consequences that might occur?</p> <p>YES: See information leaflet attached. Participants will be fully informed of the nature of the research and that their responses will not be viewed by staff at the school. The researcher's separate roles of teacher and research will also be explained. The participants are Year 11 pupils who are essentially 'moving on' and leaving the school.</p> <p>2. Will all participants be provided with a written information sheet and be provided with an opportunity to provide (or withhold) written consent?</p> <p>YES: see information leaflet, letter of invitation, parent/guardian information sheet and consent form. Participants will be fully informed and will have opportunity to provide their consent or withhold their consent. Information sheets, letters of invitation and consent forms will be distributed to participants prior to the research taking place and no participant will be forced to</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>
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<p>take part. An information sheet will also be sent home to parents/guardians.</p> <p>3. Is consent being sought for the dataset collected to be used for future research projects?</p> <p>4. What are the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate)?</p> <p>Academic school year will be the inclusion criteria for this research. Participants will be pupils aged between 15 and 16 years. The pupils will be in Year 11.</p> <p>5. Please explain briefly (and in 'lay' terms) why you plan to use these particular criteria?</p> <p>As the study is focused on the thoughts of Year 11 pupils (15-16 years).</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>6. Will people who are vulnerable be allowed to take part in this study? For these purposes, vulnerable participants are those whose abilities to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to the population as a whole. Vulnerability may arise from personal characteristics (such as mental or physical impairment) or from social context and disadvantage (e.g. lack of power, education, or resources). Prospective participants, who are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, should also be considered as vulnerable. All children and adults who lack mental capacity are presumed to be vulnerable.</p> <p>YES: As I am in direct contact with children through my job (full-time teacher at the school where this research will take place) I am fully DBS checked.</p> <p>I have had up to date safeguarding training and as I work as a teacher at the school I am investigating, I am furthermore aware who the school's Safeguarding Officer is. The research will take place within the safety of the school environment and both questionnaires and further focus groups will take place in public rooms.</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>7. Does the research activity proposed require a Disclosure & Barring Scheme (DBS) disclosure? (information concerning activities which require DBS checks are required can be accessed via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance and http://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/policiesandprocedures/crbsafeguarding/ If you are unsure whether a DBS disclosure is required please contact Human Resources or Nicola Leighton prior to submission of this application form. If you answer YES please complete the relevant section below. If you answer no please go to question 8.</p> <p>STAFF ONLY</p> <p>7a Have you (and other individuals who will be working on the research project) had a DBS disclosure initiated by Keele University?</p> <p>7b If you have answered YES to question 7a please contact Human Resources to obtain a confirmation note indicating that a DBS disclosure has been previously initiated by Keele and that it was satisfactory. Is the confirmation note attached to this form?</p> <p>If you have answered NO to question 7a please contact Human Resources immediately to arrange for a DBS disclosure to be applied for. You will still be able to apply for ethical approval in parallel to applying for a DBS disclosure. However, your project will not be approved by the ERP until you have forwarded the confirmation note from Human Resources</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p>

<p>indicating that a DBS disclosure has been undertaken and is satisfactory. Has Human Resources been contacted about this?</p> <p>HOME/EU STUDENTS ONLY</p> <p>7c Have you (and other individuals who will be working on the research project) had a DBS Disclosure (or equivalent) initiated by Keele University?</p> <p>7d If you have answered YES to question 7c please contact the Admissions Officer, Admissions to obtain a confirmation note indicating that a DBS disclosure (or equivalent) has been previously initiated by Keele and that it was satisfactory. Is the confirmation note attached to this form?</p> <p>If you have answered NO to question 7c please contact the Admissions Officer immediately to arrange for a DBS disclosure (or equivalent) to be applied for. You will still be able to apply for ethical approval in parallel to applying for a DBS disclosure. However, your project will not be approved by the ERP until you have forwarded the confirmation note from Nicola Leighton indicating that a DBS disclosure has been undertaken and is satisfactory. I confirm the Admissions Officer has been contacted and a DBS disclosure (or equivalent) has been initiated.</p> <p>INTERNATIONALSTUDENTS ONLY</p> <p>Please contact Nicola Leighton on 01782 733306 or e-mail n.leighton@keele.ac.uk before completing this section</p> <p>7e Have you (and other individuals who will be working on the research project) had a DBS Disclosure (or equivalent) initiated by Keele University?</p> <p>7f If you have answered YES to question 7e please contact the appropriate person (as advised by Nicola Leighton) to obtain a confirmation note indicating that a DBS disclosure (or equivalent) has been previously initiated by Keele and that it was satisfactory. Is the confirmation note attached to this form.</p> <p>If you have answered NO to question 7e please contact the appropriate person (as advised by Nicola Leighton) immediately to arrange for a DBS disclosure (or equivalent) to be applied for. You will still be able to apply for ethical approval in parallel to applying for a DBS disclosure. However, your project will not be approved by the ERP until you have forwarded the confirmation note from Human Resources indicating that DBS disclosure has been undertaken and is satisfactory. I confirm the relevant person has been contacted and a DBS disclosure (or equivalent) has been initiated.</p>	<p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>8. Will the study involve participants who are unable to give valid (informed) consent (e.g. children and adults lacking mental capacity)?</p> <p>If YES, what procedures will be in place to ensure that informed consent is obtained, where appropriate, from third parties (e.g. parents or carers)? And what procedures will be in place (if any) to give the participants an opportunity to have their objections recognised and</p>	<p>NO</p>

respected?	
9. Does the investigation involve observing participants unawares? If YES, what efforts will be made to respect their privacy, values and well-being?	NO
10. Will the confidentiality of participants be maintained? YES: Consent will be obtained to quote (see consent forms attached) but all participants quoted will be anonymous. No names of the school or pupils taking part will be used in their research.	YES
11. Will participants require any support to take part in the research (eg. disability support, interpreter)?	NO

(PROCEDURES)

12. Does the research involve people being investigated for a condition or disorder which has received medical, psychiatric, clinical psychological or similar attention? If YES, please give details:	NO
13. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (eg food substances, vitamins) to be administered to participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? If YES, please give details and justify:	NO
14. Will blood or other bodily fluids/tissues (including hair, nails and sebum) be obtained from participants? If YES, please give details and justify:	NO
15. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? If YES, please give details and justify:	NO

(RESEARCH PROCESS)

16. Will participants receive any reimbursements or other payments If YES, please give details:	NO
17. Does the research involve the analysis of data participants will not realise would be used by you for research purposes (e.g. confidential criminal, medical or financial records)? If YES, please give rationale:	NO

<p>18. Does the research involve the possible disclosure of confidential information to other participants (e.g. in focus groups)?</p> <p>If YES, please explain how this will be handled:</p>	NO
<p>19. Will the researchers de-brief participants to ensure that they understand the nature of the research and to monitor possible misconceptions or negative effects?</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p>	NO
<p>20. Are there any <u>other</u> ethical issues that you think might be raised by the research?</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p>	NO

(Health & Safety)

<p>21. Does the project have any health & safety implications for the researcher?</p> <p>If YES, please outline the arrangements which are in place to manage these risks:</p>	NO
<p>FOR STAFF ONLY</p> <p>22. Does your research involve travel overseas?</p> <p>If YES,</p> <p>Have you consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/</p> <p>Have you completed and submitted the risk assessment form? Available from http://www.keele.ac.uk/finance/insurance/travelinsurance/travellingoverseas-policyriskassessment/</p>	<p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>FOR STUDENTS ONLY</p> <p>23. Will any research take place outside the UK?</p> <p>If YES</p> <p>For home students - have you consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p>

<p>For international students - have you also sought advice/guidance from the Foreign Office (or equivalent body) of your country?</p>	<p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>For all students - will you be visiting any areas for which particular risks have been identified or for which the advice given is not to travel to this area?</p>	<p>YES / NO (delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>If YES</p> <p>(a) Please give details</p> <p>(b) Please outline the arrangements in place to manage these risks.</p>	
<p>24. What insurance arrangements are in place? (Please contact Alan Slater on 01782 733525 to ascertain if you will be covered by University Insurance)</p>	<p>University Insurance / Personal Insurance (delete as appropriate)</p>

SECTION D (to be completed by all applicants)

Please complete the checklist below to indicate the version number and date of any supporting documents included with this application.

Document(s)	Version Number	Date
Summary Proposal	2	June 2014
Letter of Invitation	2	June 2014
Information Sheet	2	June 2014
Consent Form: Questionnaire	2	June 2014
Consent Form: Focus Group	2	June 2014
Questionnaire	2	June 2014
Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians	1	June 2014
Headteacher's Consent	1	June 2014
Letter Outlining Changes	1	June 2014

<p>Signatures</p> <p>Principal Investigator / Research Student:</p>	<p>Signatures</p> <p>The following permissions must be</p>
--	---

Fiona Jane Dutton

<p>I understand that I must comply with the University's regulations and other applicable codes of ethics at all times.</p> <p><i>F. J. Dutton</i></p> <p>Research Student</p> <p><i>27.6.14</i></p> <p>Date</p>	<p>obtained before this form is submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- for staff who are members of a research institute, the signature of your Research Institute Director (or, for RI Social Sciences, Research Centre Head);- for staff who are NOT members of a research institute, the signature of your Head of School (of, if not in a School, other line manager)- for postgraduate research students, the signature of your lead supervisor. <p>I have read this application and confirm that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The academic and/or scientific quality of the application is satisfactory.• Arrangements are in place for the management and governance of this project <p><i>Dr J. Howlett</i></p> <p>Supervisor</p> <p><i>27.6.14</i></p> <p>Date</p>
---	---

Please ensure when submitting your proposal that you have provided a hard copy and e-mailed a copy of all the documentation to the relevant administrator:-

Applicants who have already obtained ethics approval from a separate committee should forward documentation to

Nicola Leighton, University Research Ethics Committee Administrator, Research & Enterprise Services, Dorothy Hodgkin Building, e-mail n.leighton@keele.ac.uk, telephone 01782 733306.

Applications which require approval by an University Ethical Review Panel should forward documentation to Nicola Leighton, Research & Enterprise Services, Dorothy Hodgkin Building, e-mail uso.erps@keele.ac.uk, telephone 01782 733306.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Code of good research practice <http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchgovernance/> and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of**

Fiona Jane Dutton

data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the Research Institute Director/Supervisor and may require a new application for ethics approval.

This form was developed from the Ethics application forms used within Humanities and Social Sciences with kind permission from the HUMSS Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 7 – Questionnaire

Secondary School Pupils and English Literature:

What do YOU think about English Literature?

Age: _____

Male / Female (please circle)

1. Do you like English Literature? **Be honest.** Yes / No / Sometimes (please circle)
2. In as much detail as possible, define English Literature as a subject. What is it?
3. Describe typical English Literature class activities/tasks.
4. What skills do you think you have gained by studying English Literature?

Appendix 8 – Questionnaire Data

Question 2	
In as much detail as possible, define English Literature as a subject. What is it?	
Code	Quotation
1. Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'the study and further analysis of texts' 2. 'when we have to analyse literary features' 3. 'there is analysis of certain novels' 4. 'you analyse and gain understanding' 5. 'you analyse poems and books' 6. 'you analyse and understand the text' 7. 'you have to analyse different features' 8. 'we analyse language' 9. 'then analyse the texts accordingly' 10. 'analyse poems' 11. 'analysing poems' 12. 'you can analyse the different texts' 13. 'analysing and understanding texts' 14. 'analysing their techniques' 15. 'literature is analysed and interpreted' 16. 'analyse pieces of writing' 17. 'analysing a text' 18. 'analysing the text' 19. 'analysing why poets/authors write what they do' 20. 'analyse texts' 21. 'analyse a text' 22. 'analyse the author's ideas and techniques and closely analyse to seek deeper meaning' 23. 'analysing different text types' 24. 'analysing poems' 25. 'analysing novels and poems' 26. 'analysing and picking out techniques' 27. 'analysing pieces of text' 28. 'analysing a piece of text' 29. 'analyse poems' 30. 'analysis of poems' 31. 'analysing different texts' 32. 'analysis of texts' 33. 'analysing different texts' 34. 'analysing the language used' 35. 'analysing the text' 36. 'analysing specific information' 37. 'analysing text and what the words mean' 38. 'analysing different texts'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 39. 'analysis and development of understanding of our literary heritage' 40. 'analysing poetry' 41. 'analysis of fiction and sometimes non fiction' 42. 'analysing and comparing a different range of texts' 43. 'analysing poetry and certain books or texts that we get given' 44. 'analysing the techniques' 45. 'analysing why the writers use certain phrases' 46. 'also analysing books' 47. 'analysing in depth' 48. 'interpreting poems etc and analysing them' 49. 'in depth and analysing them' 50. 'the analysis of poems and also books' 51. 'having to analyse and compare' 52. 'the analysis of literature' 53. 'the study of books and analysing them' 54. 'books and poems and analyse them' 55. 'interpreting and analysing' 56. 'you analyse key features and how it conveys emotion'
<p>2. Texts</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'texts are both contemporary and past' 2. 'both books and poems' 3. 'certain novels, novellas and poems' 4. 'gain an understanding of different books' 5. 'analyse poems and books' 6. 'understand the text' 7. 'studying written texts, such as novels and poems' 8. 'the ways in which people interpret different texts from things such as novels to poems' 9. 'studying these texts help us to develop a higher social understanding' 10. 'studying written texts such as poems and books' 11. 'pointless poems... reading a novel written years ago' 12. 'poems and books – looking at them in further detail' 13. 'poems, reading and analysing multiple books such as "Romeo and Juliet", "Jane Eyre", "Of Mice and Men" and "Lord of the Flies"' 14. 'reading texts such as poetry and novels... different texts' 15. 'understanding texts, both modern and classic texts' 16. 'a study of modern and classic texts' 17. 'studying texts (books and poems) both old and modern' 18. 'studying texts' 19. 'reading and analysing of texts and novels' 20. 'reading and analysing texts in order to find a deeper meaning' 21. 'the study of contemporary and classical books'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">22. 'the study of literature as a book or any other form... usually classic text is used'23. 'reading certain parts of books in infinite detail – without grasping the whole thing'24. 'the study of texts from modern and classic English literary heritage'25. 'modern and classic texts/poems/etc'26. 'poems or books'27. 'analysing a text, understanding what the meaning of the text is'28. 'analysing the text and understanding the meaning'29. 'both poetry and novels'30. 'studying books and novels'31. 'novels and poetry'32. 'a subject to look at varying types of texts with contrasting imagery used in different novels'33. 'a study of novel and poetry based writing'34. 'you analyse a text'35. 'the study of classic texts and novels including poetry'36. 'analysing different text types like poems as well as novels'37. 'analysing poems and other literature'38. 'establishing characteristics of the text'39. 'reading, studying and analysing novels and poems'40. 'study texts and poems'41. 'studying books and poetry'42. 'text, novels and poems'43. 'a study of written media, such as novels and poetry'44. 'analysing a piece of text and annotating them in detail'45. 'the study of English texts... such as poems, novels etc.'46. 'poems and novels... closely studying the text'47. 'the study of novels and poems'48. 'poems and books'49. 'different texts and exploring what is implied, this can be done for novels and poems'50. 'a study of different texts'51. 'a subject where you are given texts whether it be poems or a book (novel) and you have to work out the meaning'52. 'the study of books and poems and looking for the meanings'53. 'to do with texts that have been studying and annotating poems'54. 'texts in detail'55. 'the study of novels in depth...also the interpretation of poetry'56. 'sometimes I think that in the poem section we are trying to analyse what the poet means when half the time he probably doesn't mean to do it'
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	<p>57. 'books, novels, plays or poems and analysing the text'</p> <p>58. 'texts, poems or novellas'</p> <p>59. 'texts/poems'</p> <p>60. 'poetry written by sad lonely people'</p> <p>61. 'analysing text'</p> <p>62. 'studying books and poems'</p> <p>63. 'picking out pointless information out of books and poems'</p> <p>64. 'studying specific books'</p> <p>65. 'different texts'</p> <p>66. 'both poetry and prose, classic and contemporary'</p> <p>67. 'poetry and novels, should be optional, waste of time'</p> <p>68. 'annotating poems and novels'</p> <p>69. 'it require imagination and understanding of poems, stories etc.'</p> <p>70. 'annotating poems and novels'</p> <p>71. 'annotation of books/poems/novels'</p> <p>72. 'comparing a different range of texts including poems'</p> <p>73. 'studying certain text and what they show... analysing poetry and certain books or texts that we get given'</p> <p>74. 'studying texts... learning about the time period to show the purpose of the text'</p> <p>75. 'studying books and analysing the text in depth'</p> <p>76. 'it is poetry in English and also analysing books'</p> <p>77. 'analysing in depth of the text'</p> <p>78. 'essentially reading books and answering questions'</p> <p>79. 'interpreting texts, poems etc.'</p> <p>80. 'you study different kinds of books'</p> <p>81. ' a study of books, poetry and plays... analysing quotes from the text and commenting on them'</p> <p>82. 'the study of books, poems etc'</p> <p>83. 'the in depth study of creative writing such as novels and poetry'</p> <p>84. 'the study of books, poems etc.'</p> <p>85. 'the analysis of poems and also books, studying them in depth'</p> <p>86. 'reading and answering questions based on books and poems'</p> <p>87. 'finding themes in books, finding meaning in poetry etc.'</p> <p>88. 'the study of books... learning about poems, stories and articles'</p> <p>89. 'you read pieces of work like books and poems'</p> <p>90. 'reading through a novel and evaluation of the novel'</p> <p>91. 'the studying of text and then interpreting and analysing them'</p> <p>92. 'it is a study of books'</p>
<p>3. Interpretation</p>	<p>1. 'the effects of literary techniques used in order to understand the text further'</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. 'show how their techniques portray different ideas and feelings'3. 'gain understanding of different books and different culture'4. 'understand how this effects the reader, it also gives people an understanding of characters, thoughts, feelings and emotions'5. 'people can interpret different texts... allows people to see things in a different light and to have an opened mind'6. 'language techniques used to present the author's ideas... develop a higher social understanding of the themes presented'7. 'sad, lonely people can write their innermost feelings... other sad people can try and find the inner meanings'8. 'looking at them in further detail'9. 'understanding texts... discussing their effects'10. 'discovering the mood, effects and ideas that writers wished to convey'11. 'the effect it has'12. 'what effect they have on the reader and the plot'13. 'understand the deeper meaning'14. 'to find a deeper meaning'15. 'the meaning and significance of them'16. 'interpreted'17. 'we have to regurgitate a certain degree of 'scholarly rubbish' which is far-fetched and often misses the obvious denotations'18. 'understand the novels'19. 'understanding what the meaning of the text is'20. 'understanding the meaning'21. 'why poets/authors write what they do and its effects'22. 'suggest what the author could mean'23. 'the different views of a reader'24. 'author's ideas... to seek deeper meanings'25. 'their effect on the reader'26. 'literature allows us to understand an author through prose and imagine how they would like their readers to feel'27. 'what effect they have on the reader'28. 'meanings'29. 'understand a piece of text'30. 'used for effect'31. 'it involved evaluating the contexts'32. 'understanding the content and meaning'33. 'explaining what is implied'34. 'possibly have different perceptions'35. 'you have to work out the meaning and importance of it'36. 'looking at the meanings behind it'
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. 'author's meaning, also the interpretation' 38. Trying to analyse what the poet means when half of the time he probably doesn't mean to do it' 39. 'to identify different ideas and discussions and how they influence our society, aka being over the top about a 'colour' and its 'meaning'' 40. 'studying language and meaning' 41. 'specific information and interpreting them for ourselves' 42. 'being melodramatic about meaningless pieces of 'poetry'' 43. 'what the words mean, interpreting information' 44. 'inferring what the writer means (reading between the lines)' 45. 'it requires imagination and understanding' 46. 'how people feel' 47. 'answering questions' 48. 'reading and interpreting' 49. 'analysing quotes from the text and commenting on them' 50. 'answering questions' 51. 'answering questions based on books' 52. 'increasing students' imagination and descriptive skills' 53. 'to get a better understanding' 54. 'evaluation of the novel' 55. 'then interpreting' 56. 'how it conveys emotion'
<p>4. History</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'texts both contemporary and past' 2. 'different books and different cultures and time eras' 3. 'it is a subject where you learn about English over time' 4. 'reading a novel written years ago to describe problems not in modern society' 5. 'both modern and classical texts' 6. 'a study of modern and classical texts' 7. 'studying texts (books and poems) both old and modern' 8. 'the study of classic quotes' 9. 'the study of contemporary and classical books' 10. 'the study of text from modern and classic English literary heritage' 11. 'the study of literature, including modern and classic' 12. 'studying and researching classical published work' 13. 'teaches knowledge on the language of important books of this generation and previous generations' 14. 'how they influence our society' 15. 'classic and contemporary... and development of understanding of our literary heritage' 16. 'learning about the time period to show the purpose of the text' 17. 'study of books, poetry and play over a period of time in depth'

Question 3

Describe typical English Literature class activities/tasks.

<p>1. Reading</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'reading different genres of texts, poems/books etc' 2. 'initially we read through both texts ('Lord of the Flies' and 'Mice and Men') 3. 'reading through chapters and analysing important pages' 4. 'reading through the texts' 5. 'reading through the text' 6. 'reading the texts' 7. 'lots of reading is done' 8. 'individual private reading' 9. "reading texts' 10. 'reading texts in groups' 11. 'reading is often done as a class' 12. 'reading a book' 13. 'reading' 14. 'reading' 15. 'reading an extract' 16. 'reading books' 17. 'reading' 18. 'we will start to read the novel/poem and analyse' 19. 'reading' 20. 'we mainly sit and read the text' 21. 'the reading of an extract' 22. 'reading through texts' 23. 'reading through a chapter in the book' 24. 'reading texts and poems' 25. 'reading books' 26. 'reading the books' 27. 'reading through' 28. 'reading the poems/books' 29. 'reading a chapter or an act of a book or a poem' 30. 'going through books or poems' 31. 'reading through poems' 32. 'we would read a text' 33. 'we read and analyse a poem or section of the book/play we are currently studying' 34. 'read' 35. 'reading books' 36. 'reading books/quotes' 37. 'group reading' 38. 'reading a novel individually' 39. 'you read a book' 40. 'reading the book/poem/play' 41. 'reading a poem, book etc' 42. 'reading a book'
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	<p>43. 'read a book with the class'</p> <p>44. 'reading books and poems'</p> <p>45. 'reading books and poems'</p> <p>46. 'reading books'</p> <p>47. 'reading either a book or a poem'</p> <p>48. 'reading through books'</p>
<p>2. Performance and Group Work</p>	<p>1. 'class discussions... analyse text in groups to contribute our ideas and understand alternative explanations'</p> <p>2. 'later discussing what techniques are similar to the book'</p> <p>3. 'discussing the thoughts/feelings... discussing possibilities of the meaning of the text/poem'</p> <p>4. '... in partners to pick out language... our ideas will be brought forward to the whole class and shared so we can learn from each other and what their views are on a piece of writing'</p> <p>5. 'discussing ideas presented and techniques used'</p> <p>6. 'discussing ideas presented... discuss alternative interpretations... participate in activities to help others understand alternative interpretations'</p> <p>7. 'analysing passages in groups and reporting back to the class'</p> <p>8. 'role play activities, comparing dramatisations to original texts, representing ideas used abstract ideas e.g. drawing interpretations'</p> <p>9. 'performing part of the text, taking notes then discussing with the rest of the class'</p> <p>10. 'performing parts of the text... feeding back to the class'</p> <p>11. 'when reading a play we often give out the parts and act it out'</p> <p>12. 'for poetry, discussion in groups is – I do all the work'</p> <p>13. 'discussing techniques/texts, group work'</p> <p>14. 'discussing the text'</p> <p>15. 'sharing with the class'</p> <p>16. 'class discussions of what we each think each part of the text contains'</p> <p>17. 'listening to poem analysis and working as a class to get as many points about a quote'</p> <p>18. 'working together as a class'</p> <p>19. 'talking, expressing views and thoughts'</p> <p>20. 'annotating as a group'</p> <p>21. 'we all split into groups of 3-4 and we were given an A3 piece of paper and Miss gave us each a character or a theme to focus on'</p> <p>22. 'discussing their potential meanings'</p> <p>23. 'group discussions'</p> <p>24. 'talking about the language of it'</p> <p>25. 'group reading'</p>

	<p>26. 'we did group reading'</p> <p>27. 'popcorn reading – group'</p> <p>28. 'class reading, analysing texts and poems'</p> <p>29. 'group reading of a book/play followed by what has happened discussion'</p>
<p>3. Working with the Text</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'individual study and analysis of text' 2. 'picked out all different techniques within the novels... we also completed coursework on 'Jane Eyre again going through the books' 3. 'summarising chapters, practising to write exam answers... analysing the different poems' 4. 'do tasks allowing us to compare classic texts' 5. 'analysing a passage/text' 6. 'pick out key features within the texts' 7. 'different texts etc will be shown and given out and we will work either on our own or in partners to pick out language techniques' 8. 'games based on the text (such as matching answers to themes)' 9. 'trying to find second shades of meaning... learning how a conch resembles power in modern society' 10. 'looking at effects of language' 11. 'working through exam questions, completing coursework' 12. 'we have to analyse the passages from the text' 13. 'analysing text/poems' 14. 'analysing passages, creating storyboards for parts of the text' 15. 'analysing passages, creating a comic strip' 16. 'annotate texts and draw pictures and storyboards to illustrate key aspects of texts... we also do match up tasks between the text, language feature and the effect' 17. 'annotating texts' 18. 'making links between different books/poems' 19. 'a piece of text is put on the board and students are asked to identify certain techniques that are used and how they are effective' 20. 'copying our teacher's ideas into the books, often I do not see the same meanings as my teacher' 21. 'annotating, essay/paragraph writing, answering exam questions' 22. 'annotating... answering exam questions' 23. 'listening to Sir read a book and write notes... go through a poem on the board and annotate out anthology' 24. 'analysing using our own ideas' 25. 'writing and answering quote-analysis questions, annotating texts and poems' 26. 'recapping on the last bit of the novel read and looking at

	<p>themes such as power etc... answering exam questions'</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">27. 'analysis of its content (annotations)'28. 'annotating... creating tables for characters ad themes'29. 'annotating poems'30. 'dissection of key passages... analysing of techniques used by the writer e.g. metaphor'31. 'annotating it, we often do practice questions'32. 'annotating books/poetry, practice questions'33. 'annotating poems, answering questions'34. 'annotating poems'35. 'annotate the poem or text'36. 'annotate words to see shades of meaning'37. 'highlighting and annotating texts such as poems, picking out key techniques'38. 'annotating poems and answering questions'39. 'annotating poems, books'40. 'going through poems and annotating them... revising'41. 'annotating poems... answering exam type questions about the texts'42. 'going through a section of a book of a poem and finding the meaning and importance of it, what the author wants you to think'43. 'in class, we would annotate the poems and books... also looking at key terminology... also do practise questions to build up skills'44. 'annotating poems, assessments'45. 'picking out key words and phrases'46. 'annotating poems, using techniques and inference'47. 'annotating texts, language techniques'48. 'highlighting and annotating words or phrases'49. 'we pick out literary techniques and say how they impact the writing'50. 'spending five minutes on something such as "he went over" and trying to analyse instead of taking the literal meaning that he went over the hill'51. 'annotating them, making notes on themes and structures'52. 'annotating books/poems and finding their true meaning...practising answering exam questions and comparing different poems/books'53. 'annotations, picking out "useful" quotes'54. 'highlighting and annotating, picking out literary techniques'55. 'annotating poems'56. 'annotating poems or books which I personally find boring'57. 'analysing poems, plays, speeches'58. 'poems, annotating... annotate novel'59. 'annotating poems'
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 60. 'creating notes' 61. 'we revise and do A3 sheets of summaries' 62. 'annotate and interpret them... use key terminology to annotate the texts, write about the language, form and structure of each text' 63. 'we annotate' 64. 'doing analytical questions' 65. 'getting quotes from books' 66. 'answering exam type questions' 67. 'picking out quotations' 68. 'picking out quotes' 69. 'answering a question using PETER paragraph style for response' 70. 'annotate books and poems' 71. 'highlighting key language features' 72. 'going through poems, comparing' 73. 'identifying common processes in the pieces' 74. 'writing about our favourite books, English essays about Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Of mice and Men' and poems including 'The Highwayman'' 75. 'answering exam style questions about the books or poems' 76. 'answering typical questions on the books' 77. 'see what techniques are used and also what skills are used'
<p>4. Media and Films</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'we sometimes watch films' 2. 'we watched the films, later discussing what techniques were similar to the book' 3. 'we watched media coverage which linked to the poems we study' 4. 'we watch media on different poems... we also do interactive studies' 5. 'watched film versions of the texts' 6. 'watching film adaptations of the texts' 7. 'watch films to help us to understand novels' 8. 'watching clips/films' 9. 'watching summary videos' 10. 'watching the clips of the films' 11. 'watching a revision video' 12. 'watching educational videos about the poems and the thoughts and history behind them' 13. 'watching 'Of Mice and Men' and 'An Inspector Calls' 14. 'watching a film'
<p>Question 4 What skills do you think you have gained by studying English Literature?</p>	
<p>1. Analytical Skills</p>	<p>1. 'I have also learnt how to analyse in depth'</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. 'analysing poems – picking out techniques'3. 'I now am able to analyse poems with much more detail'4. 'I can analyse pieces in much better detail and relate them between to contexts'5. 'able to explain how these language features are used in the texts and explain what they suggest'6. 'finding alternative interpretations'7. 'analytical skills'8. 'being able to find alternative interpretations when analysing a text'9. 'being able to analyse texts and find techniques, analysing texts to see what they infer'10. 'I have gained analytical skills'11. 'better analysis'12. 'finding alternative interpretation, looking at how things can be interpreted differently'13. 'analysing texts'14. 'analysing'15. 'analysis of texts and aspects of good writing in books and poems'16. 'analysing individual key words and phrases'17. 'seeing alternative meanings to quotations'18. 'skills to analyse text'19. 'and to do close analysis of a text'20. 'I have developed close analysis skills for example the identification of techniques and their consequences'21. 'discovering more shades of meaning'22. 'I am able to create poetry and interpret and understand in more depth interpretations of characters and how important language analysis is'23. 'ability to infer, ability to look at alternative meanings and decide why an author may choose to use certain words or techniques'24. 'how to analyse texts'25. 'I have gained a better understanding of seeing different shades of meaning'26. 'I think that I can pick out shades of meaning a lot better'27. 'closely analyse a text/poem'28. 'being able to interpret the meaning of different poems and novels'29. 'being able to close analyse a text and being able to explain how and why it's important'30. 'my analysis has improved'31. 'look more into depth of the novels and poems I am reading, I have also noticed how I now start to analyse movies and general things in everyday life better'32. 'being able to find what the author's meaning of the book
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	<p>and poem is'</p> <p>33. 'interpreting, inferences'</p> <p>34. 'understanding poems'</p> <p>35. 'how to explore the deeper interpretations of texts'</p> <p>36. 'interpreting different meanings from quotes, analysing the moral choices of an author/playwright/poet'</p> <p>37. 'being able to pick out meanings in a poem'</p> <p>38. 'I feel as though I have learnt how to analyse poems well but I don't feel like I've gained anything that I will actually use in 7 years' time'</p> <p>39. 'how to identify hidden meanings in words'</p> <p>40. 'I am more able to analyse different texts'</p> <p>41. 'I have gained inference skills when analysing'</p> <p>42. 'being able to interpret texts in different ways'</p> <p>43. 'using alternative interpretations'</p> <p>44. 'I have gained the skill to analyse texts effectively, infer alternative meanings'</p> <p>45. 'analyse quotes in detail'</p> <p>46. 'analysing text'</p> <p>47. 'analysing skills'</p> <p>48. 'analysis'</p> <p>49. 'how to analyse pieces of writing and what the writer is trying to show'</p> <p>50. 'how authors think'</p> <p>51. 'improved analysing text'</p> <p>52. 'reading between the lines'</p> <p>53. 'analysis text'</p> <p>54. 'analysing'</p> <p>55. 'I have learnt how to analyse books a lot more'</p>
<p>2. Language Skills</p>	<p>1. 'explaining what techniques mean and what they stand for'</p> <p>2. 'stating the technique and what it portrays... to write with much more fluency and knowledge, to a higher standard'</p> <p>3. 'writing skills'</p> <p>4. 'I have learned how to pick out and use different language features'</p> <p>5. 'I have been able to gain skills when reading texts, both being able to read thoroughly and skim through texts when necessary'</p> <p>6. 'improved spelling and grammar'</p> <p>7. 'identifying language features and why they are used'</p> <p>8. 'I find it easier to spot specific techniques and can suggest the reason they have used'</p> <p>9. 'a good ability to organise my ideas well to put across a point successfully'</p> <p>10. 'can easily identify techniques used'</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">11. 'my writing skills – knowledge of vocab has widened'12. 'I have learnt to write waffle quickly'13. 'use of English techniques'14. 'knowing literature-themed terminology'15. 'how to read and understand novels with including techniques'16. 'picking out different techniques'17. 'foreboding'18. 'wider range of vocabulary, being able to identify language types'19. 'foreboding and a smoother writing style'20. 'how to pick out literature terms in a test'21. 'identifying different word types'22. 'annotating'23. 'I have been able to develop my own writing techniques'24. 'I have learnt about techniques that can be used to do good writing'25. 'wider range of vocabulary'26. 'being able to pick out key terms in a text or poem'27. 'I can pick out more techniques successfully'28. 'I have gained better, more defined skills of how to annotate'29. 'annotating, picking out key information, techniques'30. 'I think I am more advanced at picking out techniques in the poems'31. 'annotating poems independently'32. 'I have learnt techniques, structures and literary terms'33. 'picking out techniques'34. 'paraphrasing and learning to read through nonsense and understand non-existent meanings'35. 'new terms'36. 'interpreting, inferences, annotating, picking out key information, techniques'37. 'being able to pick out techniques e.g. simile'38. 'better choice of vocabulary'39. 'annotating, interpreting, picking out key information'40. 'literary terms'41. 'picking out English techniques'42. 'how to pick out and learn specific analytical phrases in poems'43. 'how to pick out and learn specific analytical phrases in poems'44. 'key terminology'45. 'developed English reading skills'46. 'how to read more fluently'47. 'reading skills, picking out key phrases from texts, understanding texts/poems'
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	<p>48. 'reading skills...new vocabulary'</p> <p>49. 'understanding of text, some famous quotes and new vocabulary'</p> <p>50. 'my reading skills... I learnt a variety of vocabulary'</p> <p>51. 'how to read, broaden the vocabulary bank, improve my handwriting'</p> <p>52. 'learned new vocabulary, developed reading skills'</p> <p>53. 'being able to compare texts'</p> <p>54. 'being able to compare texts'</p> <p>55. 'a better understanding of symbolism in literature'</p> <p>56. 'a more sophisticated vocabulary list'</p> <p>57. 'group reading'</p> <p>58. 'understanding the techniques'</p> <p>59. 'reading skills and picking out quotes'</p>
<p>3. Wider Understanding Skills</p>	<p>1. 'I think I have learnt how to read between the lines and how to identify alternative interpretations'</p> <p>2. 'allows me to think critically'</p> <p>3. 'interpretation skills, confidence skills'</p> <p>4. 'I can understand deeper emotions from characters'</p> <p>5. 'reading things in the media and understanding that there is always an ulterior motive behind what they are putting'</p> <p>6. 'wider knowledge of creative written texts'</p> <p>7. 'learning how a conch resembles power in modern society'</p> <p>8. 'allowed me to think about the meanings of certain things'</p> <p>9. 'I have gained a greater appreciation for older texts and am able to understand different interpretations'</p> <p>10. 'knowledge of literary heritage texts, finding alternative interpretations of texts, can help with learning history'</p> <p>11. 'the ability to be reduced to tears and have my emotions dictated by literary works along with understanding the emotions of characters within the texts and how it links to the way in which they act'</p> <p>12. 'to look deeper into texts as there is often a deeper meaning that I don't see at first'</p> <p>13. 'view alternative interpretation, something that does not have to be used in everyday life'</p> <p>14. 'having alternative viewpoints'</p> <p>15. 'I have been able to read a lot more, helping me over the disadvantage of my dyslexia'</p> <p>16. 'Literature has allowed me to think outside of the box, I have also gained maturity of response'</p> <p>17. 'understand poems and novels more deeper'</p> <p>18. 'finding new authors and books, I think that my imagination and my style of writing has changed for the</p>

	better since I started reading more regularly'
Question 5	
Describe a time(s) you have enjoyed studying English Literature.	
1. Text	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'when it is a book I enjoy' 2. 'analysing the text 'Of Mice and Men'' 3. 'reading the book 'Of Mice and Men'' 4. 'I enjoy how school allows us to read a book(s) of our choice through KS3, it enables myself to discover genres of books I haven't before. I believe it helps promote reading in class. I also enjoyed poems and poets' work as it personally appeals to me' 5. 'analysing and reading John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men, although somewhat disappointed we didn't do 'Grapes of Wrath, the better one' 6. 'reading 'Of Mice and Men'' 7. 'reading 'Of Mice and Men'' 8. 'highlighting different techniques from a text. Also reading out loud from the passage' 9. 'I found slight parts of 'Mice and Men' interesting' 10. 'I enjoyed reading 'Of Mice and Men' because it is a very famous novel' 11. 'reading 'Of Mice and Men'' 12. "'Of Mice and Men', it was good because the plot was good' 13. 'when we read 'Of Mice and Men' as a class together' 14. 'when studying 'Charge of the light brigade' - I found it interesting, reading 'An Inspector Calls'' 15. 'when we learnt about 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Of Mice and Men'' 16. 'some of the poems are inspiring and interesting' 17. "'Of Mice and Men' reading' 18. 'poems' 19. 'studying 'Romeo and Juliet' as I liked the romance and imaginative side' 20. 'reading 'Of Mice and Men', whilst studying classic poems such as 'Charge of the light brigade'' 21. 'I have enjoyed studying some poems as they are interesting' 22. 'certain poems and learning about the stories behind them e.g. the history of a war poem' 23. 'studying 'OMAM' ('Of Mice and Men') because I found the book very interesting and thought provoking' 24. 'reading and interpreting the novel 'Of Mice and Men'' 25. 'when going through the books' 26. 'when doing poems and studying 'Of Mice and Men' as I found it interesting and beneficial'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">27. 'reading 'An Inspector Calls''28. 'I enjoyed learning about 'OMAM' as I enjoyed reading the novel as I think it is a very good book'29. 'when reading 'An Inspector Calls' (J. B. Priestley) and learning how the working class were treated'30. 'I liked studying 'OMAM' and 'AIC'... I also liked the conflict poetry'31. 'reading interesting poems such as 'Out of the Blue''32. 'I have enjoyed looking at the books 'Of Mice and Men' and 'An Inspector Calls' as they are interesting... I have also enjoyed looking at the poems'33. 'studying 'Of Mice and Men' which related to the history'34. 'I have enjoyed reading the two novels 'Of Mice and Men' and 'Lord of the Flies''35. 'reading through both 'Of Mice and Men' and 'Lord of the Flies''36. 'I have enjoyed studying books which I haven't read before'37. 'when we read and annotate the books and poems'38. 'reading through 'Lord of the Flies' text and analysing the writing'39. 'I liked reading the novels'40. 'poems'41. 'some parts of the reading the novels'42. 'I enjoyed studying poetry and 'Lord of the Flies''43. 'reading certain poems e.g. 'Medusa''44. 'when we were reading the texts ('Lord of the Flies' and 'Of Mice and Men')'45. 'when I am satisfied with my annotations and I understand what the writer is trying to portray'46. 'some of the poems we have been studying have been humorous and I enjoyed reading 'Of Mice and Men''47. 'studying the novels'48. 'the study of the novel 'Of Mice and Men'49. 'when writing 'Of Mice and Men'50. 'reading the novels'51. 'with an engaging book such as 'Lord of the Flies''52. 'reading 'Lord of the Flies''53. 'I have liked studying poetry'54. 'when I understand the meaning of a hard poem to understand'55. 'analysing texts'56. 'when I found out I was studying 'Jane Eyre' – the reality was not so good, when reading all of the books for the first time – especially 'Lord of the Flies' as it is an interesting anthropological study. When studying for myself some of the poems – as poems are beautiful in
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	<p>their concise way of saying many things, 'The Falling Leaves' etc dispelled this'</p> <p>57. 'when discussing the history behind the text'</p> <p>58. 'I have enjoyed reading 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Jane Eyre' and comparing the attraction shown in both as I found this interesting. I have enjoyed studying poetry on the topic of conflict'</p> <p>59. 'I really enjoy reading the novels and poetry as, although I do not enjoy every text, I find them interesting. I especially liked reading 'Jane Eyre' as it contrasted with what I normally read and so opened my eyes to different genres'</p> <p>60. 'reading different types/styles of text e.g. 'Romeo and Juliet' to conflict poems, I especially enjoyed 'Romeo and Juliet because Sir used to bring it to life with different activities'</p> <p>61. 'studying 'Lord of the Flies' as I find the book more interesting'</p> <p>62. 'different genres of poems'</p> <p>63. 'classic novels (e.g. 'Romeo and Juliet'), reading texts, analysing poems'</p> <p>64. 'I enjoyed reading 'Jane Eyre''</p> <p>65. 'annotating poems to do with conflict, studying themes in 'Lord of the Flies''</p> <p>66. 'I love doing poetry'</p> <p>67. 'poetry and 'Of Mice and Men' as they were texts I enjoyed and emotion based'</p> <p>68. 'when we studied 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Of Mice and Men and poetry'</p> <p>69. 'when we learnt about the Shakespearian texts'</p> <p>70. 'I enjoyed analysing the poems'</p> <p>71. 'enjoyed studying 'Lord of the Flies' – really good choice of book'</p> <p>72. 'I enjoyed studying 'Romeo and Juliet''</p>
<p>2. Film and Media</p>	<p>1. 'comparing the book to the film'</p> <p>2. 'when we watched 'Of Mice and Men' and 'Romeo Shakespeare'</p> <p>3. 'when we watched the documentary on 9/11, I found it interesting'</p> <p>4. 'watching the 9/11 documentary in order to get a better understanding of a poem'</p> <p>5. 'watching OMAM''</p> <p>6. 'watching and describing 'Of Mice and Men''</p> <p>7. 'watching 'Of Mice and Men''</p> <p>8. 'watching documentaries to gain further understanding of the poems'</p> <p>9. 'we also watched the 'Of Mice and Men' film to see what</p>

	<p>times would have looked like in 1930's America and to see if the film matched the books' detail'</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. 'relating novels to film' 11. 'relating the books to the films' 12. 'watching films' 13. 'watching 'Of Mice and Men' 14. 'when we get to watch films in class as it helps me to understand the texts better such as 'Romeo and Juliet'' 15. 'watching the films, it allows you to understand further what is going on in the text' 16. 'watched media and related them to different societies at that time' 17. 'the watching the modern film as it helped my knowledge of the text'
<p>3. Never</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'when we studied 'Of Mice and Men' I thought that it was extremely boring' 2. 'never' 3. 'I prefer English Language' 4. 'I haven't had any good times' 5. 'no good times' 6. 'I have never enjoyed studying it' 7. 'never have' 8. 'never' 9. 'n/a' 10. 'I haven't' 11. 'I don't enjoy English or any subject' 12. 'n/a'
<p>Question 6 Describe a time(s) you have disliked studying English Literature.</p>	
<p>1. Repetition</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'when it is a book that drags and is boring to read' 2. 'reading through the same page of the novel multiple times' 3. 'the hunt for symbolism is ongoing' 4. 'a bit repetitive' 5. 'really repetitive' 6. 'every time because it just confuses me' 7. 'reading through the plays in class was too long and should have been independent reading' 8. 'annotating poems, very boring' 9. 'annotating everything someone says' 10. 'annotating poems all lesson and not understanding what I am annotating' 11. 'I find texts/poems boring to analyse and read' 12. 'most of the time I sit there thinking about how mundane and outdated the texts are. I sat there thinking how poems frankly don't influence society, so why am I

	<p>studying it?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. 'analysing poem after poem and doing the same activity again and again, when the poems are not even that different' 14. 'when having to study 'Of Mice and Men' into great detail' 15. 'repeating points which happen throughout the books' 16. 'reading through books, and annotating them as this can sometimes be long and boring' 17. 'I have not disliked English Lit, except for the repetition of annotating poems' 18. 'it is difficult to catch up' 19. 'annotating poems alone consistently' 20. 'I don't like having to remember a lot of quotations' 21. 'the repetition of poetry analysis' 22. 'just reading through a poem in a lesson as it can sometimes be boring' 23. 'analysing all the poems in the same way' 24. 'having to remember the key quotes and analysing them in detail' 25. 'when trawling through book after book when I would have loved to read and readily have interpreted for myself. There is nothing so depressing as finding one's favourite books boiled down to nothing' 26. 'when analysing book after book – I think it's perhaps a bit too much work' 27. 'reading full length novels – takes a while when looking for meanings' 28. 'I dislike 'Jane Eyre' because it was very long and tedious' 29. 'working through the poems, always being picked for use as an example in class' 30. 'the masses of poems, going through them all'
<p>2. Essays</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'also, when it is a certain area of writing I do not like' 2. 'when we do long controlled assessments/questions' 3. 'I disliked the controlled assessment' 4. 'doing practice papers as it is hard to link all the information together' 5. 'I dislike writing about a text that is hard to analyse, I dislike writing answers to exam style questions' 6. 'I have disliked doing practice questions especially on poems' 7. 'when we did the exams' 8. 'comparing themes' 9. 'when we had to write controlled assessment' 10. 'writing controlled assessments, doing exams' 11. 'exam technique, controlled assessment write up' 12. 'doing terrible in my mock exams'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. 'times which I have disliked studying English Literature is when we have to write long essays for homework, I disliked this as I find it boring when writing long pieces of work without help' 14. 'when I have to write a long, analytical essay in a short amount of time or have to write one for homework' 15. 'a piece of coursework which requires us to find pieces of information from 'Jane Eyre' by Charlotte Bronte' 16. 'I disliked writing essays about the text' 17. 'I disliked preparing and completing the essay tasks, however, over time this eventually became easier'
<p>3. Shakespeare</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Romeo and Juliet', got boring reading it over and over again' 2. 'Shakespeare, as I really did not understand what he said most of the time, this resulted in me not writing as much as I should have done' 3. 'Shakespeare' 4. 'when studying 'Romeo and Juliet' language, Elizabethan era' 5. 'I disliked studying Shakespeare as I often found the text hard to understand due to the vocabulary' 6. "Romeo and Juliet', only a main theme, and thought the theme was boring' 7. 'when studying 'Romeo and Juliet'' 8. 'whilst spending months studying 'Romeo and Juliet'' 9. 'Shakespeare – it's just pointless and might as well be another language because it's not English – hard to understand' 10. 'when learning about Shakespeare, this is because I found it difficult and hard to grasp' 11. 'studying 'Macbeth'' 12. 'when reading 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Jane Eyre' for our coursework task, many managing to complete it without having read either book in its entirety, this defeats the point of studying the subject' 13. 'I disliked studying 'Romeo and Juliet' as I do not like the text and studying older literature' 14. 'comparing 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Jane Eyre'' 15. 'I disliked doing 'Romeo and Juliet' as the Shakespearian language is difficult to understand'
<p>4. Poetry</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'poems – don't really enjoy it' 2. 'when studying poems' 3. 'I really did not like studying about poems' 4. 'I dislike the poem side of English Literature as I think that they are boring and find that they hold very little information' 5. 'annotating poems'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. 'studying poems as I found it difficult to understand them and their form/structure' 7. 'poems – annotating them' 8. 'often, apart from 'Hawk Roosting', that was the only poem I liked' 9. 'poems' 10. 'most of the poems are boring and hard to understand' 11. 'some poems were not as entertaining and educational as others' 12. 'when we read poems what I don't like' 13. 'studying poems' 14. 'sometimes poems can be boring' 15. 'annotating poems and analysing' 16. 'reading most poems' 17. 'I did not enjoy some poems' 18. 'reading long poems with Old English language and structure (I could not understand them)' 19. 'studying poetry' 20. 'studying poetry, some of the poems are un-engaging and hard to interpret, meaning that they become more difficult' 21. 'some un-engaging poems are un-enjoyable' 22. 'learning the poems' 23. 'I also dislike a couple of the poems' 24. 'when encountering poems/texts which present ideas that conflict with my ideas and opinions' 25. 'poetry (all)' 26. 'when we studied poetry' 27. 'I don't enjoy studying poems as much as I do studying other genres such as novels'
<p><u>Question 7</u> Do you think it is important that students study English Literature? Why? Why not?</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of Language Skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'it allows you to analyse more books and be more detailed' 2. 'it has helped me improve my English as I have improved in spelling and have a wider range of vocabulary because of the texts I have read' 3. 'sometimes because it gives them a more in depth study of the book/poem/text that you are reading' 4. 'yes because we need to learn to write properly and formally' 5. 'it allows students to develop new skills including analysing a text and reading skills' 6. 'it broadens their vocabulary' 7. 'it grants you the ability to interpret a piece of text and analyse it, and pick out key terms/points'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">8. 'it helps us to develop our English language skills'9. 'yes I do, to help develop their writing'10. 'it gives people essential skills in analysing and reading'11. 'it gives people the skills to look beyond the words on the page'12. 'everybody can learn about texts in the past and what they mean or show, also it shows how writing styles have changed throughout the years'13. 'does not improve your English skills'14. 'I think they should study about poems but not annotating all the key points in the novel'15. 'it helps them gain imagination and helps them to interpret and find out inferences of a wide range of things'16. 'I think it helps with English language, also it enabled me to use more sophisticated language'17. 'it helps us to develop other skills to help us to achieve the best possible grades'18. 'it gives students an extra skill and understanding'19. 'they can spend more time learning useful things e.g. English language or maths'20. 'it also shows the evolution of language through books'21. 'I think it helps when trying to understand the text further, it is also important with English language when analysing the meanings of key words and in the different style of texts'22. 'it can develop skills for other subjects and also in the English language exam'23. 'I think it would be important just to study language if you are lower ability'24. 'it gives people skills that are useful outside of the classroom'25. 'it gives them skills such as analysing between the lines but I don't think it helps in day to day tasks unless you want to go into a job about English such as a teacher'26. 'it's important to understand text and know the meaning'27. 'I think that studying English literature allows you to learn valuable points but is not so important'28. 'it can give them techniques that may help them to study texts in the future'29. 'reading can help people with writing for both English language and English literature, it can also widen students' vocabulary'30. 'extend vocabulary through different texts'31. 'it not only encourages deeper understanding of texts... but improves the quality of students' own work'32. 'it is good to help you become more literate in any work'
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	<p>you do'</p> <p>33. 'yes, as it develops writing ability'</p> <p>34. 'it shows people texts that can be used to show interpretation and how to form an argument/point using quotations to back up their skills'</p> <p>35. 'it is more important to learn how to write rather than looking at others'</p> <p>36. 'it is quite important but it hasn't really developed my skills'</p> <p>37. 'language is more useful'</p> <p>38. 'it develops understanding of the English language and helps with essays and English skills in other subjects e.g. history'</p> <p>39. 'if it is made worthwhile it will be important as a study because it will have an educational benefit'</p> <p>40. 'to interpret and understand the text in their own way'</p> <p>41. 'different styles of writing are interpreted in modern times due to changes in culture etc.'</p> <p>42. 'it is important to understand how language has evolved'</p> <p>43. 'I think it is important for students as it helps to elaborate English skills which helps with other areas of English as well as literature'</p> <p>44. 'I also think that the analytical skills we gain are important'</p> <p>45. 'they are able to learn how to compare and analyse texts'</p> <p>46. 'it develops your writing and analysing skills'</p> <p>47. 'it is essential in developing general English skills and in being able to be perceptive about language, also useful for developing English reading skills and writing skills'</p> <p>48. 'it is important because it helps people to develop their writing and reading skills'</p> <p>49. 'it helps you gain more English skills'</p> <p>50. 'it helps people to understand language techniques and the evolution of language throughout time'</p> <p>51. 'English literature helps you understand the development of our language especially when looking at Shakespeare texts and classics like 'Jane Eyre''</p>
<p>2. Interest and Appreciation of Literature and Reading</p>	<p>1. 'Yes, because it allows children to discover new books, develop their understanding of books. It helps with structure of writing and sophisticated vocabulary a person has. I also believe that it is important for children to study English Lit because it allows people to discover new books and authors. They may not have access to books at home so they can get them through schools.'</p> <p>2. 'I think it's important that people have either an understanding or appreciation of literature be it books, poetry or the like. Literature is the description of the</p>

	<p>human condition and the analysis of that is maybe one of the most important things to learn – a mirror unto ourselves.’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. ‘I think it is important to study English literature as it gives you the opportunity to learn about famous British tragedies such as ‘Romeo and Juliet’.’4. ‘it is slightly important as it allows you to read more in depth’5. ‘could also get people into reading’6. ‘Yes, as if someone in a lower English class is interested in the topic then they should have the opportunity’7. ‘but some people may enjoy it and do well’8. ‘Yes because some may be more talented at literature than language and should get the opportunity to show this’9. ‘it’s also enjoyable to study’10. ‘I think it is as it is an interesting subject but may not be right for everyone as it may be difficult for children with less abilities’11. ‘yes, it provides students with a new opportunity’12. ‘It can often be a challenging subject but has many benefits and can often be enjoyable’13. ‘Yes, why Literature is part of our heritage and is an honour to past great writers that we are able to feed from their triumphs and understand the many fans of Literature. We are able to learn and engage in reading, which many students may never do and considering reading is such an important skill it is vital in education.’14. ‘it does help you to discover good poets and poetry as well as discover books I wouldn’t normally go for’15. ‘I think it is important as through literature students read different texts, which could make them more interested in reading books’16. ‘perhaps encourages further reading’17. ‘Yes as it is around us all the time, reading in books, magazines and advertisements’18. ‘As an experience – it ought to be useful, as everything should, However to make it worthwhile it needs to contain more of the so-called ‘literary heritage’ (by which I mean before 1940s and some of those texts which have stood the test of time and rightly so).’19. ‘I think it is important because it is a way of allowing young generations – who may not be entirely familiar in the way in which the texts is written... also learning about certain texts mean that the heritage of the author is continued and not forgotten.’20. ‘Yes because you learn about new books’
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. 'it encourages them to read ore which is important' 22. 'Yes, I do think it's important because it encourages reading which I love!' 23. 'Yes, because it give students the opportunity o experience texts from different eras and different types of writing.' 24. 'It also develops the students knowledge of texts from the literary heritage' 25. 'I do, because it teaches students to appreciate texts that they wouldn't ordinarily choose/have the time to read' 26. 'Because it is fun, interesting and builds an ability to understand the way texts put ideas across' 27. 'Yes because it helps children to develop an interest in literature and this develops characters and an appreciation' 28. 'Because it makes us a little more cultured if not intelligent' 29. 'Poems and texts should be updated to reflect 1) something students would enjoy to study and 2) texts and poems to reflect modern day issues.' 30. 'It also helps people to understand social problems, and other people's opinions on them.' 31. 'it allows pupils to have a more open mind towards pieces of text.' 32. 'it gives people an understanding of other cultures and people's emotions' 33. 'it allows them to understand and become aware of much more texts which are older than what I would see today' 34. 'I believe that it is important because it allows students to fully appreciate the author and how they portray the ideas to the reader'
<p>3. Future Career and Studies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Yes because it's extra GCSE' 2. 'No because it's not required for all jobs' 3. 'I think that English Literature is important but not necessarily for everyone. It is interesting but often not practical for many people' 4. 'Nope because it doesn't help you in life' 5. 'Not really, I don't see how it would benefit people for the future.' 6. 'I think it's pointless and should study real life English not pretentious poems that mean absolutely nothing to today's generation' 7. 'Yes as it will aid students in college when they have to study texts' 8. 'I don't think it has a huge affect on my education in my opinion'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. 'Yes because not only can it lead to learning more about history' 10. 'I think it is good to be able to study English Literature as it can be a good experience and extra GCSE but it is not vital.' 11. 'I think it is important if you are wanting to do something in the future with English.' 12. 'I think it is important because it gives people skills that are useful outside the classroom.' 13. 'not many people wish to analyse a poem in their lives, I think it should be targeted to those who wish to learn further English in life' 14. 'it doesn't affect everyday life' 15. 'I don't think it is important because we don't use it in everyday life, so you don't need it' 16. 'Yes as they may need it later on in life in a career' 17. 'I don't think it has an impact in everyday life' 18. 'compare and analyse... which is an important attribute if they were to study English later on' 19. 'This would help people later in life when they go into university or study English as a later point in life. It also provides people with a GCSE qualification which will contribute to further education and careers in the future.' 20. 'I don't think we will ever use this skill again in life' 21. 'can help in other subjects' 22. 'it also gives students an extra GCSE grade' 23. 'I do think it is important as I enjoy English Literature and plan to take it at A level... it is also useful as it provides an extra GCSE'
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Question 8

Finally, what is English Literature *meant* to do? What is the purpose of studying it?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand Texts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'I think the purpose of English Literature is to explore our language and appreciate the importance of certain texts' 2. 'helps to condition the brain to understand how ideas are conveyed using language features and can facilitate learning history' 3. 'an opportunity to study different writers of different texts' 4. 'to help students with English as a whole, and to explore a different area of English' 5. 'to help you understand classic text and to interpret it for yourself' 6. 'it should contribute to the greater and greatest study – that of knowledge' 7. 'develop a person's knowledge of English Lit and books and develops their reading skills'
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. 'helps your understanding of books and poetry' 9. 'to enhance your understanding of text that you would sometimes not look at in such depth' 10. 'learn about different books' 11. 'to extend people's understanding of literature and writing as a whole' 12. 'it helps to gain a wider knowledge of different texts' 13. 'English Lit is meant to help you look deeper into things and understand poems' 14. 'to develop our understanding of poems and novels' 15. 'to develop your understanding of literature' 16. 'meant to give the up to date generation a strong relationship with language of the past and stories we can learn from' 17. ' to introduce people to different types of text' 18. 'it is meant to give an idea of why different types of literature is used and how it comes across when we read it' 19. 'gives you deeper understanding of traditional literature'
<p>2. Encourage Reading</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'the purpose of it is also to encourage people to read' 2. 'I think the purpose of studying English Literature is for the enjoyment of doing so and not just getting an extra qualification' 3. 'it is meant to encourage people to read, and enjoy poetry more' 4. 'I think that the purpose of studying English Literature is to encourage people to read and enjoy novels and poetry more' 5. 'to broaden our knowledge of prose and poetry and learn to appreciate the skill of the author/writers' 6. 'it is meant to widen the reading of students, letting them see different styles and experience different writers' 7. 'I think the purpose of studying English Literature is to both emphasise the importance of reading and to teach people to fully understand the meaning of texts' 8. 'to broaden a person's knowledge' 9. 'to widen their knowledge of class literature' 10. 'It is meant to inspire people to read more and give children a chance to read classic books and some of the best books in the world' 11. 'It helps you to read more frequently as you might like to read books. I think that if you read something it may give you more of an in depth study of the book which may make you understand what is happening in it and why it was written' 12. 'to allow students to have the opportunity to read and to have the skills to analyse and understand text in depth'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. 'can get people interested in reading books' 14. 'It developed your understanding of different texts... It develops a mature response' 15. 'The point is to be made aware of the importance of texts and how to have respect for texts and writers' 16. 'encourage students to read' 17. 'to open students to literature and give them the opportunity to study books'
<p>3. Develop Critical Skills</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'to develop a child's English skills' 2. 'helps students to understand and learn about famous poets and authors' 3. 'as well as developing people's analytical skills' 4. 'it also helps people to develop skills such as analysing and finding alternative interpretations within a text' 5. 'it can develop your ability to be analytical and perceptive about either a book or even an article' 6. 'it is meant to teach you how to analyse and notice techniques in texts, also its purpose is to help students to realise other people have the same feelings and emotions' 7. 'allows people to discuss and share different opinions on texts' 8. 'analyse and interpret and link books' 9. 'It should challenge our thoughts and ideas, it should raise discussion and leave no question unanswered. It should bring out the best in our minds, it should teach us to accept the good and criticise the bad. It should not be about exams.' 10. 'developing analytical skills across student's lives' 11. 'to make students more analytical' 12. 'to allow you to understand the context of a book and how to analyse it' 13. 'it increases the student's imagination and their own ability to write fiction and non-fiction texts' 14. 'It is the primary art, the methods of describing the human condition. Writing is the expression of the soul and the ability to analyse that, to perceive the inner most thoughts and feelings, morals and ethics is the most important skill.' 15. 'enhance English writing' 16. 'to improve people's quality of getting and also reading' 17. 'help reading and your language/literature skills' 18. 'to help the reader develop new skills' 19. 'to give you the skills of being able to read and interpret a text/poem' 20. 'if you come across something to read you can understand it more'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. 'building up skills in reading and writing' 22. 'it should teach us about past and present writing styles' 23. 'looking, reading, analysing' 24. 'studying the past and how things changed; help you know what key points that poets and authors use' 25. 'it widens your knowledge of people's interpretations of things and their imaginations' 26. 'understand the past and English heritage' 27. 'To help people understand our past through what was written. It can also helps us understand the nature of humans through what has been recorded' 28. 'improving people's vocabulary and grammar' 29. 'to learn to pick out things in text' 30. 'being able to take different views and meanings' 31. 'the purpose is to understand the world that we live in' 32. 'analysing and interpreting texts' 33. 'to help improve people's grammar' 34. 'understand the world we live in by looking at other meanings' 35. 'To develop skills of analysis and maturity of reading different texts. It also gives skills that allow you to compare texts, which also improves communication' 36. 'to allow students to be able to analyse large bodies of text' 37. 'to develop our understanding and analysis of texts' 38. 'to be able to analyse a text' 39. 'to encourage questioning and deeper understanding of literature' 40. 'to closely analyse a text' 41. 'use the skills that have been learnt to analyse and interpret texts' 42. 'to develop different skills'
<p>4. Get a GCSE/Job</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'develop their analytical skills needed for university and A-level' 2. 'to give you skills you can apply to other pieces of text which you can be faced by later in life' 3. 'help you to develop skills in other areas' 4. 'to gain a GCSE and to understand other people's emotions and feelings' 5. 'it could help in certain careers, this could encourage people to read and could help people to improve their English skills' 6. 'improve skills to do with writing which is useful for later life' 7. 'not a clue other than to look good on an entry for getting into a Russell Group university' 8. 'studying English Literature is an extra qualification'

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">9. 'gives you an earlier knowledge so you can study it at 6th form and further if you enjoy it'10. 'you get an extra GCSE'11. 'It should be taught as it is – an art. But I suppose a BTECs good as well'12. 'it gives you an extra GCSE'13. 'it looks good and may open the views of college placements'14. 'gives you an extra skills'15. 'to gain extra literary skills that can be used possibly in further education'16. 'to gain an extra GCSE'17. 'to get another GCSE which can help in later life'18. 'it provides students with another GCSE'19. 'to get another GCSE because that's all people care about, so you have more chance to go to University and Colleges'20. 'to get another GCSE, to get a better job'21. 'gives an extra option to do later in life i.e. A-levels'
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Appendix 9 – Interview Data

Transcript 1 – Group A

Present: FJD (Researcher), Pupil N (female), Pupil A (male), Pupil G (female), Pupil R (female), Pupil E (female), Pupil Z (male), Pupil EM (female) - Year 11 Pupils at School P – aged 15-16 years

Duration: 8.12 minutes

FJD: So let's start off, it says do you like English Literature be honest. So if we just go around the room.

N: I like it.

FJD: You like it

G: To an extent. Yeah.

R: It's alright.

E: The books are alright but not the poetry bit.

FJD: Fair enough

A: Books but not poetry.

Z: Yeah, the same. Books but not poetry.

FJD: Ok.

EM: Books not poetry.

FJD: Ok. So, you're here because obviously you know you've got quite a variety of different views towards it. So, our first point is, it says in as much detail as possible define English Literature as a subject. So, what do we think it is? You don't have to go round the room, it could just be any of you. What do we think it is? Do you know what it is? Or not?

A: It's, like, studying traditional English novels and understanding how the authors use technical terms to portray certain characters.

FJD: Yeah. Anyone else?

N: Is it just kind of understanding classical and modern literature?

Fiona Jane Dutton

FJD: Ok. Anything else? What else?

E: It's like analyse the fact that, erm, language and the effect that it gives.

FJD: Yeah. Ok. Anyone else? To try and define it. Ok, so it says to try and describe typical English Literature class tasks and activities. So what is typical of an English Literature lesson?

R: Analysing poems, yeah.

FJD: A lot of poems?

R: Yeah.

FJD: Yeah. What else?

Z: We like read a paragraph of something and then we go through it as a class and then we put our hand up and we can say whatever we think about that paragraph. And kind of different techniques used in that paragraph.

E: There's a lot of practice questions that we go through all the time so within a given time we have to answer a question. Then like peer assess it.

FJD: Yeah, ok, anything else that you think of that defines what an English Literature class is like?

G: When we're doing poetry we listen to the author read the poems as well. Which kind of helps us to understand it.

FJD: Ok, right, So, really interesting for you being Year 11 students – what skills do you feel you've gained from studying English Literature?

EM: It helps a lot with your techniques, like it helps a lot to link in with your other English exams. Because you learn about what techniques you could use in the others.

R: Yeah.

FJD: What else?

Z: It lets you analyse things in more detail too, more that you're used to doing.

R: Yeah.

FJD: Do you think sometimes we analyse too much? Because I know previous students have said things like, I can't read a book again without picking things out and seeing all sorts of techniques or watch a film without thinking that's foreshadowing. Do you think that or not?

Fiona Jane Dutton

R: No

EM: No not really.

Z: Hmmm. No.

FJD: Ok.

Z: You need to read it in a certain amount of detail to get the good grades in the exam and with the writing in the exam.

FJD: And are those skills of worth past the exam?

Z: [laughs]

EM: [laughs]

G: Some of them.

Z: [laughs]

G: It depends. I think maybe, some of them.

A: Depends.

N: It depends what your interests are I suppose.

EM: I suppose if you go on |

Z: | and what job you're doing.

FJD: Yeah. Do you think English is linked to any particular jobs?

R: English teacher!

ALL: [laughs]

FJD: [laughs] Yeah, other than that?

Z: Hmmm, journalists.

N: Yeah.

EM: Historians to a certain extent.

R: Yeah.

Fiona Jane Dutton

E: Most jobs have an aspect of essay writing to them so yeah.

FJD: Ok. So, it says describe a time you've enjoyed studying English Literature. So, what do you think? What have you enjoyed?

Z: Hmm [muffled]

FJD: If anything? Is there anything? There might not be.

N: Erm, we've been reading 'Of Mice and Men' a lot and some of the lessons were on a lot of context so the history and everything which was really interesting.

E: Yeah.

FJD: Is that important do you think? The history side of it and learning about the background?

N: Yeah.

FJD: Ok.

A: The introduction to new texts and unseen texts.

N: Yeah.

FJD: Anything else that you've enjoyed? OK, describe a time when you've disliked it. What things do we dislike?

Z: We've been kind of doing the same kind of method with the poems each lesson. It's kind of a bit monotonous. Erm, doing it stanza by stanza for every poem and there's about thirteen poems

R: Yeah sometimes you have to over analyse and it just makes it a bit repetitive.

G: When we were going through the 'Lord of the Flies' and 'Of Mice and Men', Sir sort of skipped past a few of chapters because we didn't have time which sort of knocked me out of it as we didn't know what had happened previously and then we're already of this.

FJD: From those things then, the next question is do you think it's important that student study English Literature but also what important things do you think have come out of your study? What things do you reflect back on and think that was worthwhile? Any particular novel, texts, group work maybe?

Z: I do think it's better that we do the texts but not the poems as they're a bit outdated and it doesn't really affect our lives at the moment. Unless you want to be in that kind of occupation.

FJD: Do we think it's important that students study it? Because you'll know at this point that you're studying English Literature but there are other classes beneath you in the school that aren't. So it's only the top few sets that do. So do you think it's important that you study it? Or not?

N: I think it does help you with other things like history. It helps you to sort of like pick out the purpose of words. So it is transferable skills.

R: I think it would be better if it actually was an option that we could take. Because if we didn't want to take then it just doesn't interest us but if we do then it helps us get a better grade.

E: I think it helps embrace differ authors like Shakespeare. I thought that was good when we studied Shakespeare and understood him as a playwright.

FJD: Do you think that Shakespeare's important?

E: Yeah. I do.

FJD: Why do you think he is important?

E: Well it's just |

Z: | It's our English heritage and you learn about your past and how he's created an education system like now.

G: I think it can all be quite outdated sometimes. I think that's what puts people off because there's stereotypes of what you think when you think Shakespeare and therefore some people just automatically switch off. If it was a more modern or interesting book or something that then...

FJD: Do you think maybe we should have more modern texts on the curriculum? Because we could have. We pick those texts for you do you think more modern texts would be better?

R: Yeah.

A: I think you could mix them, that'd be quite good – some heritage and some modern books to compare and contrast.

FJD: So finally then, what is English Literature meant to do? What is the purpose of studying it? What is it meant to do for you?

N: To try and engage a deeper understanding of something rather than just reading it at face value.

Fiona Jane Dutton

FJD: What was the purpose of studying it? What was the point?

Z: It gives you more understanding of why authors would do certain things in books and then you can link that to later in your life when you're reading other things. It gives you that wider understanding of what you're reading.

R: I think it opens your eyes to what texts you might enjoy in the future.

FJD: So maybe do we think it might make us a little more open minded?

R: Mmm.

A: Yeah.

FJD: Ok. Well done.

Transcript 2 – Group B

Present: FJD (Researcher), Pupil LA (female), Pupil B (female), Pupil A (male), Pupil L (male),
Pupil G (female) - Year 11 Pupils at School P – aged 15-16 years

Duration: 5.06 minutes

FJD: Ok so first of all do we like English Literature? Be honest.

LA: Er, it's alright yeah.

B: Yeah.

A: Not really, no.

FJD: Fair enough.

B: Yeah.

G: Some parts of it like "Romeo and Juliet" yes, but then some parts of it hmm.

FJD: OK.

L: No, I find it a bit hard.

FJD: Ok, so we have a real mixture of opinion then. So, in as much detail as possible define what English Literature is as a subject. So this is what you did on your questionnaires. What is it?

G: I just think its books, analysing books.

FJD: Yeah.

B: Just analysing.

A: And poetry.

FJD: Anything else if we've got to explain what it is? What would we say?

LA: [laughs]

G: Don't know.

A: Is it, like, defining what the words mean, in different contexts.

Fiona Jane Dutton

FJD: Yeah, ok, it says describe typical English Literature class activities and tasks. So, typically what do you do during English here? What sort of things do you do every day?

LA: Well we analyse poems.

G: Analyse "Of Mice and Men" and the "Inspector Calls".

LA: [laughs]

FJD: Do we know what it means to analyse?

B: Erm, well.

FJD: Because that's a big word that we're using here a lot.

B: Well, find some instances of it and find what something means.

FJD: Ok, yes.

G: Different interpretations of a word.

FJD: OK, anything else? What else do you normally do during your lessons?

A: We read books.

FJD: Do you do a lot of reading?

A: Yeah quite a lot.

FJD: Is that enjoyable or does it drag on?

G: Oh it drags on |

LA: | Well it depends what it is.

FJD: Ok, so it depends what it is. Ok, so what skills do you think you've gained from studying English Literature? So you're right at the end now and you're leaving very soon. What have you gained from it?

G: Well how to annotate more things.

B: And to look at the meaning of stuff and what they can mean.

FJD: So meanings, anything else? What do we think we've learnt from it other than just getting through this exam?

Fiona Jane Dutton

LA: Understanding a wide range of texts and stuff.

FJD: So describe times when you've enjoyed studying English Literature, so what have you liked about it? If anything, it might be nothing.

G: Well it wasn't this year but when we did "Romeo and Juliet" that was good, well alright and I preferred that than what we do now. And when we did "Of Mice and Men".

FJD: But you preferred "Romeo and Juliet"?

G: Oh yeah.

FJD: Why did you prefer that?

G: I don't know really it was just something that seemed a bit better and it appealed to me.

FJD: What else have we liked? I mean it might be nothing, you can say nothing.

A: [laughs]

L: [laughs]

A: Well watching actually watching the films and then seeing what it's like in the books.

FJD: Do you think films are important?

A: Yeah.

G: Yeah |

LA: | Yeah

FJD: Because obviously for English teachers to put a film on lesson after lesson it's not always viewed as a really good thing but a lot might feel it is important to see a film version of it. Some texts are really long aren't they and to watch the film might help. So is that an important thing?

A: Yeah

L: Yeah

LA: It helps you to understand it more.

FJD: Describe times when you've disliked it. Might be easier. What have you disliked about it?

Fiona Jane Dutton

B: The poems.

A: Poems yeah.

FJD: What is it about poems?

LA: They're hard to understand sometimes.

B: Yeah.

G: They're a bit boring. I mean it's just a poem isn't it.

LA: [laughs]

FJD: What else have we not liked?

L: The long analysis of different quotes and things like that.

G: Doing things and sticking to the structures and writing, like, loads about them, it's just a bit boring.

FJD: Ok, do you think it's important that students English Literature, why or why not?

LA: Yeah.

B: I mean it, like, widens your imagination doesn't it.

LA: It does.

G: And a better view on different things so you can analyse things a bit better and understand and interpret more words.

A: And it makes you understand your own language more.

FJD: Yeah, good point about the language side of it definitely. Ok, finally, what is English Literature meant to do, so to summarise what do you think the purpose of studying it was?

LA: Well, understanding different types of texts.

FJD: Anything else?

B: Well, just for the enjoyment of it and the books and stuff.

FJD: Any other purpose?

Fiona Jane Dutton

G: Well I just thought maybe just doing it for the exam I suppose.

FJD: Ok, that's a fair opinion, anything else to say? No? Ok.

Transcript 3 – Group C

Present: FJD (Researcher), Pupil L (female), Pupil C (female), Pupil M (male), Pupil T (male) -
Year 11 Pupils at School P – aged 15-16 years

Duration: 6.15 minutes

FJD: Ok so our first question then, do you like English Literature be honest. So if we just go round, you don't have to say your name or anything.

M: Sometimes yeah.

T: Yeah.

C: Sometimes.

L: Yeah.

FJD: Ok, so we're got a bit of a mixture. Ok so it says in as much detail as possible define English Literature as a subject. So what is it if you've got to say – what is that subject?

T: The analysis of written work.

M: That's a good answer.

FJD: [laughs] that is a good answer.

C: [laughs]

L: [laughs]

FJD: What else? How else could we define it?

C: [laughs]

FJD: Well what's hard about defining it?

L: Well there are different interpretations.

C: Yeah it's your understanding.

FJD: Ok. It says describe typical English Literature class activities and tasks. So what typical things do you do during and English lesson?

T: It changes from year to year.

Fiona Jane Dutton

FJD: Yes, is that important that we have the change?

M: Because in Year 10 it was more analysis of books and literature of written work but in Year 11 it's more exam prep.

FJD: What else is it, what typically do you do every lesson?

L: Erm, well we remind ourselves of quotes from poems and themes.

T: Understanding, well analysing what the literature is about, like with poems it could be rhyming, what is it, couples and, with literature it could be what are the underlying themes of it.

FJD: So what skills do you think you've gained from studying English Literature? What have you gained from it?

L: [cough – laugh]

FJD: Or is that a hard question?

L: [laughs] erm yeah.

C: What do we think we've gained from it?

FJD: Well what will you take away from it?

M: Being able to write in a sophisticated manner.

C: Oooo [laughs]

L: [laughs]

T: [laughs] he's pulling out the big ones.

L: [laughs]

T: Imagery and symbolism.

FJD: Yeah.

T: In that a red curtain isn't always something about danger, it's a red curtain.

FJD: Erm ok! [laughs]

C: [laughs]

Fiona Jane Dutton

L: [laughs]

FJD: Do you think then that sometimes we overdo things for English Literature? Do you think things are done that aren't necessarily necessary like thinking about that red curtain?

L: Yeah

T: Well most authors intend symbolism and when they intend symbolism they know where it is and I often get quite surprised when people talk about things which suggest randomly it's randomly chosen.

FJD: Ok, good point. Any other skills that we think we've gained? No? Ok, describe a time when you've enjoyed studying English Literature so a moment when you've particularly enjoyed something.

L: Erm.

T: When you get to read things.

FJD: Yeah?

M: Oh yeah, reading is good.

L: Yeah.

FJD: So the reading side of it yeah? Is there anything in particular that you've read or you've studying that you think, you know, that was really good and that should be continued on or other years should study that?

T: I don't know. I just know I do like it when they choose a book to do that I've already read so I have |

M: | [laughs]

T: | And it's going yeah I know what this is about.

C: Well I like reading a book you haven't read as then you get to learn and it's not boring looking at something that you've not done.

FJD: Do you think that you've studying the texts in enough depth ready for exams and controlled assessment? Or maybe we could have done more?

T: Oh no, there isn't.

L: Yeah.

Fiona Jane Dutton

T: Yeah we've done a lot|

L: | a lot

FJD: | a lot, yeah I thought you might say.

L: Mmm

FJD: Describe a time when you've disliked it. So what things could be got rid of? So maybe you or your classmates, what's the general opinion on things we don't like?

T: Well, I guess it's just focusing on like Curley's Wife and focusing on things that don't necessarily matter to the story. Like you know looking for symbolism where there isn't any.

FJD: Ok, anything else that we don't like? No? Ok, do you think that it's important that students study English Literature? So the studying of something like Shakespeare or the novels that you've looked at, some students might say that isn't necessarily relevant to my life beyond here. How relevant do you think is it? Is it important that students study it?

M: Yea. Because it's not just giving you an understanding of English, its an understanding of the history of English as well.

C: Ooo [laughs]

FJD: What else?

L: Well I do think it should be your choice to study because some people will be well how does that link to that? But if you think about it, it does. And, well, some people just give up.

FJD: Ok finally then, what is English Literature meant to do, so what's the purpose of studying it? You're right at the end now, almost left in the next few weeks. What was the purpose of all that prep and studying that? The plays and stories and poems? What is it meant to do? What is the purpose of it?

T: To give you a better understanding of writing and so when you're reading something you can really appreciate what it is and secondly, to pass our exams.

FJD: Yeah

C: [laughs]

FJD: What else? Anything else or not? No? Ok.

Transcript 4 – Group D

Present: FJD (Researcher), Pupil ME (female), Pupil W (female), Pupil I (female), Pupil A (male), Pupil M (male), Pupil K (female) - Year 11 Pupils at School P – aged 15-16 years

Duration: 8.41 minutes

FJD: Ok so first question is, do you like English Literature, be honest. So if we just go round.

M: No.

A: Yes.

ME: I like it yeah.

W: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

K: Yeah.

FJD: Ok. In as much detail as possible define English Literature as a subject, so what is it? Now I know you did this on your questionnaire but now just collectively, together what do we think it is? Do we understand what it is or not?

M: It's very boring.

I: [laughs]

K: [laughs] |

ME: | [laughs]

FJD: Ok.

A: Well it helps to, like, improve technique and when analysing the way authors put across ideas.

FJD: Anyone else? What is it?

I: Its analysing techniques from books and poems.

FJD: Ok. Anything else?

K: Studying written texts and giving ideas and things.

Fiona Jane Dutton

W: We study the ideas but then we take them further and put them in a bigger context.

FJD: Ok describe typical English Literature class activities, so typically what have you done this year? What do you find in a typical English lesson?

I: Analyse some English.

M: Well it depends what text it is, normally it's a poem or a chapter and we go chapter by chapter and it was horrible and very very time consuming.

FJD: Do you think that so much of what you do does take a long time? And is that a positive or a negative?

I: Negative.

A: Yeah, erm negative. It can take a long time. |

I: | And you have to remember it.

K: Yeah, you can forget. |

ME: | Yeah.

FJD: Quite long winded?

A: Well I do think they split it up quite well. Like they do it in chapters and it's like |

FJD: | Is that good when you do it in chapters? Rather than just looking at the text as a whole?

A: Well yes I think so.

FJD: So what skills do you think you've gained from studying English Literature? You're leaving now, you're Year 11, well we've only got a few weeks left, what do you think you've gained from it in terms of skills that you can take with you?

W: When we get to university we will be expected to use those analysis skills for every subject.

A: And greater techniques and vocabulary sort of thing.

K: It helps with English language as well as you can identify techniques easier.

FJD: Right so do we understand the difference then for you between your language and your Literature?

Fiona Jane Dutton

K: Yep.

M: Yeah |

A: | Yeah

FJD: Because you're an unusual year group in that there's only a few class that do the Literature side of it. Literature is an option subject but at this school we don't allow you to tick a box and sign and say you want to study it.

M: Oh wow.

FJD: So that's interesting in terms of your attitude towards it. Do we think it's, I don't know, important to study it?

I: I think you should get the option.

A: Yeah.

FJD: So you could opt in or opt out?

A: I know a lot of people would prefer to do it over language or just do language lower down. |

M: | Or not do them in the same year.

A: Yeah! I mean we could have done one last year and another one this year couldn't we.

M: Or just not do it at all. That would be alright. Don't mind that.

W: Well with making it more of an option you'd get some people and brighter students who really should be doing it but just don't do it anymore. So they might think oh, we'll do something else that's easier and then they won't do it.

FJD: Yes I suppose that's human nature isn't it, just to pick something like that. That's a fair point. So, describe a time when you've enjoyed English Literature. Is there anything you've enjoyed over the past few years? It could even be something from Year 7 and you think I really remember that.

M: Sir's millionaire things. [laughs]

K: Yeah

ME: Yeah

Fiona Jane Dutton

M: It's to give us our results back.

FJD: Ok, anything else that Sir has done?

A: Well we had a grid at one point when we were doing "Of Mice and Men" and er we had to shout out the theme every time it came up.

FJD: Anything else that's memorable like that?

M: The way we actually celebrate our results, even though it's a mock [laughs] but it, it makes a joke out of it and what with the Photoshops and grids and everything it makes it a little bit more interesting that looking and saying oh you got an A, you a B or whatever. You're actually more interested than oh it's just another grade.

FJD: Ok, interesting points. A time when you've disliked it then? What could we get rid of, what could we change?

I: Having to remember it all so specifically.

W: I don't like the fact that in our controlled assessment we wrote essays on "Romeo and Juliet" and "Jane Eyre" yet the majority of the class haven't even read the books.

A: Yeah [laughs]

W: Because you get so bogged down in the detail you don't look at the thing as a whole and therefore they don't enjoy it. You've got to have actually read the books to enjoy it and to realise why you're doing English Literature.

A: Yeah.

FJD: I suppose that raises an important issue in terms of studying a whole text or looking at individual sections or maybe watching the film. So other groups have said oh no we want to keep the films as they're really important. Do you think that would be important to look at a full text? Or do you think looking at something like "Jane Eyre" and all of that would put some students off?

A: Well honestly it's better than rather you're left half empty because when, well especially when you do your coursework you need yes to look at the individual sections but then you need to talk about the book as a whole. But you really had to generalise if you hadn't really read it which meant that most of us hadn't. So basically we just went off what we'd seen on the screen, because we never actually finished going through it and analysing it in class. I actually think we stopped quite a few chapters before the end and then just did it from there.

FJD: Hmm ok. So, do you think it's important that students study English Literature why and why not?

Fiona Jane Dutton

M: Well I think it is but to a certain degree. It's like you need a basis for techniques and stuff and of course to be able to write.

FJD: Do you think things like studying your Shakespeare and "Jane Eyre", do you think that's important for you, for leaving school?

A: It depends on where you're going. Personally, I'm not going anywhere where me knowing what happened in "Romeo and Juliet" is going to be of a single speck of use to me but for some people yes, if you're going down that route. So, in your future life maybe yes, but for me personally no.

W: Hmm

FJD: Why do you think it might be important?

W: Well because I think you need a general knowledge and I think reading texts is a good way of getting engaged with history and it's a good way of gaining other people's insights into the world. It's a good way of us evaluating ourselves. And we need it to read books and if English Literature is the only way that people are going to do it, if it's the only way that they are going to actually analyse and if they have to be taken through it by a teacher, then I think it's important that we do.

FJD: Ok. Girls do you think anything else? Do you think it's important or no?

ME: Well, yeah actually I think it will encourage more people, if they do, do it and like it then it will encourage people to read more and erm enjoy English.

FJD: Ok, finally then, what is English Literature meant to do? Just to sum up, what is the purpose of studying it? Obviously for the exam, but do you know the purpose, obviously I know you have talked a little bit about that.

K: Yeah. It provides analytical skills really doesn't it?

FJD: Yeah?

K: And cultural skills and cultural knowledge of books and ideas and of other people's opinions and stuff.

A: It gives us a small understanding of your literary heritage but it's not really very broad enough for you to get that purpose across.

FJD: Ok. Anybody else?

W: Well as British people you associate, well you assume, that everyone has read Shakespeare or something. But if we hadn't done English Lit then no one would have read Shakespeare. It's just getting rid of that knowledge that you just assume everyone has.

Fiona Jane Dutton

A: Yeah.

FJD: Ok. Well maybe it comes down to the haves and the have nots?

W: Oh yeah.

FJD: Maybe one day you might look back and think yes I'm glad that I did that.

W: Yeah.

FJD: Or maybe you won't.

K: [laughs]

ME: [laughs]

FJD: Ok, that's lovely. Thank you so much.

Emmaus Discussion Topics – 2016/17

An essential part of the student voice is to hold discussions in Emmaus groups. Student Voice discussions should take place once a month for 5/10 minutes. A vote should be taken and notes from these discussions should be given to the Emmaus representatives who will meet with the Pastoral lead or designated staff member to hold a student council meeting. Feedback will be distributed to all Emmaus groups through the minutes. The topics for student voice are given below, the criteria for consideration and the vote to be taken will be planned by the Emmaus team to make it appropriate to the Year group.

Week Beginning	Topics for Discussion	Points to consider
12th Sep	The importance and impact of student voice	How does student voice operate at P*****? What has student voice achieved in the past? What should be the priorities for student voice this year? How can we improve the student voice within the college?
Student Council Meeting - 7th October		
10th Oct	Health and Safety in school	Is there any area in school that you consider to be unsafe? Do you know who to report anything you consider unsafe to? Do you know a safety check is done by all HOD every fortnight.
14th Nov	Bullying	Do students feel safe in college? Do students know what bullying is? Have they experienced it? Do students know what to do if they are being bullied? Do we need to do more or different things to tackle bullying? How much does peer pressure influence our actions? What about cyber-bullying?
Student Council Meeting - 25th November		

28th Nov	Lesson structure	Do you know you target grades for all of your subjects? Do you understand what lesson objectives are? Do you understand what success criteria is? Are all teachers using lesson objectives and success criteria? Are follow up tasks given every fortnight? Do the follow up tasks help your progress. Are SWANS carried out after assessments?
12th Dec	Progress	Are follow up tasks given every fortnight? Do the follow up tasks help your progress? Are SWANS carried out after assessments? Do the SWANS help you to progress? Do you know if you are improving? How do you know you are improving? Do you know why revision is important? Do you know different ways to revise? Do you know what works best for you?
Student Council Meeting - 6th January		
9th Jan	School society	Are you aware of what is going on in and around school on a weekly basis? How do you know what is going on in and around school on a weekly basis? How can we promote what the school is doing on a weekly basis?
23rd Jan	Extra-curricular	What do you think about the range of extra-curricular opportunities at P*****? Is there anything else you would like to see on offer? How can we attract more students to participate?
School Council Meeting - 3rd February		
6th Feb	Rights Respecting School	Do you know what rights are? How does P***** allow you to have your say? Do you know P***** has RRS Emmaus reps? Do you know what these reps do?
27th Feb	Pastoral system	Do you know who your pastoral lead is? Have you had an issue that you have had to speak to your pastoral lead about? Were you happy with the outcome? If you had a concern would you approach your pastoral lead? If not who? Is Emmaus time purposeful? Give examples of activities that you

		find useful. Do you say prayer?
Student Council Meeting - 10th March		
13 th March	Safeguarding	Do you feel safe in school? Do you know where to go and who to see if you don't feel safe? Is there any way we can make you feel safer in school?
27 th Mar	Parental involvement in learning	How do we involve parents in learning? Do your parents support your studies? What is the most effective support? Is there anything else we can do to support parents? What do you think of parents' evenings at P*****? Do you receive useful information to improve your learning?
3rd Apr	E-safety in college and out	Do students know the key messages of e-safety? Do you think students are safe on the internet? What can we do further to develop e-safety in students?
Student Council Meeting – 5 th May		
24th Apr	The Learning Environment	What do you think about your college environment? What areas of the college look most effective? What in the environment supports your learning? Is there anything that distracts from your learning?
8th May	Website	What do you think about the P***** website? Do you use the website and what for? Is it easy to use? Do you think it has everything a website needs? How could it be developed further?
Student Council Meeting - 9th June		

Fiona Jane Dutton

22nd May	Enrichment opportunities@ P***** and Catholic Life	What are enrichment opportunities? What enrichment opportunities are on offer at P*****? What are the most effective enrichment opportunities? Are there any other opportunities you would like to see at P*****? What opportunities are there to develop your faith? Would you appreciate anything else to help you to develop spiritually?
12th June	Future Pathways	What help are you given at college to help prepare for life after college? What has helped you most? Do you know what you want to do after college? Do you know what you need to do to reach your goals? Do you know how to get help or guidance if you need it?
Student Council Meeting – 7 th July		