



# Course Start

Course Start is independent learning you need to complete as a fundamental part of your introduction to the course. It should take you approximately 5 hours to complete.

| Course Name                                                  | English Language A Level                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| How this Course Start fits into the first term of the course | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It will provide a stimulus for creative coursework, worth 20% of the final grade</li><li>• Understanding &amp; learning about grammar underpins the course, so exploring word-classes is key to success at A level</li></ul>                                    |
| How will my Course Start learning be used in lessons?        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The autobiographer, Bill Bryson, who we explore in this opening task will provide inspiration for your first piece of coursework: a memoir.</li><li>• Grammatical starters in Year 1 lessons will help cement your confidence with how language works</li></ul> |
| Course Start learning objectives                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysing language features in an unseen nonfiction text</li><li>• Practising creative writing</li><li>• Learning new technical terms</li></ul>                                                                                                                 |
| Study Skills                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading &amp; writing</li><li>• Analysis</li><li>• Research</li><li>• Widening vocabulary</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                             |

## Expectations for: English Language A Level

Our specification is: [Pearson Edexcel AS and A level English Language](#)

### What this course involves:

We will explore the ways in which our language-use adapts according to different contexts and analyse how various writers and speakers use English for their own specific aims. From adverts, to social media exchanges to articles, we focus on how and why language cannot be separated from the society in which we live.

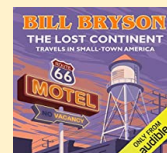
We will examine a diverse range of topics, including how people shape their identities based on our gender, dialects, ethnicity/diversity & power, occupation and class. As we do so, you will develop the skills of analysis, grammar and writing. Students also learn how the English language has evolved over the last 450 years and the ways in which children acquire speech and literacy.

You will have the opportunity to produce a range of creative writing coursework from opinion articles, reviews and memoirs, worth 20% of the final grade. In Year 2, you will also collect your own data to undertake an Investigation project, based on a specific linguistic area.

# COURSE START

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE A LEVEL TASKS

1. Read and annotate the extract below from B. Bryson's 'The Lost Continent' about the town he grew up in, in America. Identify any techniques which you feel are significant and copy them into the chart overleaf, as demonstrated.
2. For your first class in Sept, produce a short piece of writing about 500 words long, starting with the words: '*I come from...*' Use techniques like Bryson's when you write this up and ensure the work you bring in is a second draft, which is thoroughly checked for accuracy and neatness. It is a really good idea to focus on one part of a place for this, rather than an entire town. I.e. a particular street, neighbourhood or area.
3. Filling in the grid on the final page, see if you can identify examples of different word-classes/grammar from the Bryson text below.



### TASK 1: 'The Lost Continent' by Bill Bryson

I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to.

When you come from Des Moines you either accept the fact without question and settle down with a local girl named Bobbi and get a job at the Firestone Factory and live there forever and ever, or you spend your adolescence moaning at length about what a dump it is and how you can't wait to get out, and then you settle down with a local girl named Bobbi and get a job at the Firestone factory and live there forever and ever.

Hardly anyone ever leaves. This is because Des Moines is the most powerful hypnotic known to man. Outside town there is a big sign that says WELCOME TO DES MOINES. THIS IS WHAT DEATH IS LIKE. There isn't really. I just made that up. But the place does get a grip on you. People who have nothing to do with Des Moines drive in off the interstate<sup>[1]</sup>, looking for gas or hamburgers, and stay forever. There's a New Jersey couple up the street from my parents' house whom you see wandering around from time to time looking faintly puzzled but strangely serene<sup>[2]</sup>. Everybody in Des Moines is strangely serene.

The only person I ever knew in Des Moines who wasn't serene was Mr Piper. Mr Piper was my parents' neighbour — a leering cherry-faced idiot who was forever getting drunk and crashing his car into telephone poles. Everywhere you went you encountered telephone poles and road signs leaning dangerously in testimony<sup>[3]</sup> to Mr Piper's driving habits. He distributed them all over the west side of town, rather in the way dogs mark trees. Mr Piper was the nearest possible human equivalent to Fred Flintstone, but less charming. He was a Shriner<sup>[4]</sup> and a Republican<sup>[5]</sup> — a Nixon Republican — and he appeared to feel he had a mission in life to spread offence. His favourite pastime, apart from getting drunk and crashing his car, was to get drunk and insult the neighbours, particularly us because we were Democrats<sup>[6]</sup>, though he was prepared to insult Republicans when we weren't available.

Eventually, I grew up and moved to England. This irritated Mr Piper almost beyond measure. It was worse than being a Democrat. Whenever I was in town, Mr Piper would come over and chide<sup>[7]</sup> me. 'I don't know what you're doing over there with all those Limeys,' he would say provocatively<sup>[8]</sup>. 'They're not clean people.'

'Mr Piper, you don't know what you're talking about,' I would reply in my affected<sup>[9]</sup> English accent. 'You are a cretin.' You could talk like that to Mr Piper because (1) he was a cretin and (2) he never listened to anything that was said to him.

'Bobbi and I went over to London two years ago and our hotel room didn't even have a *bathroom* in it,' Mr Piper would go on. 'If you wanted to take a leak in the middle of the night you had to walk about a mile down the hallway. That isn't a clean way to live.'

'Mr Piper, the English are paragons of cleanliness. It is a well-known fact that they use more soap per capita than anyone else in Europe.'

Mr Piper would snort derisively at this. 'That doesn't mean diddly-squat, boy, just because they're cleaner than a bunch of Krauts and Eyeties. My God, a *dog's* cleaner than a bunch of Krauts and Eyeties. And I'll tell you something else: if his Daddy hadn't bought Illinois for him, John F. Kennedy would never have been elected President.'

I had lived around Mr Piper long enough not to be thrown by this abrupt change of tack. The theft of the 1960 presidential election was a long-standing complaint of his, one that he brought into the conversation every ten or twelve minutes regardless of the prevailing drift of the discussion. In 1963, during Kennedy's funeral, someone in the Waveland Tap punched Mr Piper in the nose for making that remark. Mr Piper was so furious that he went straight out and crashed his car into a telephone pole. Mr Piper is dead now, which is of course one thing that Des Moines prepares you for.

1. *[motorway*
2. *peaceful*
3. *proof*
4. *a group for men which is committed to community service*
5. *one of the main political parties in America*
6. *the other main political party*
7. *tell me off*
8. *to try to get a reaction*
9. *pretend*

#### 1. ANALYSIS CHART

| Language feature           | Example                                       | Comment                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First person pronouns      | <i>I come from Des Moines.</i>                | Establishes personal voice to connect with reader                                                     |
| Variety of sentence-length | <i>Somebody had to. When you come from...</i> | 2 declarative sentences, one minor, at start, then longer, complex one to reinforce the humorous tone |
| Repetition                 |                                               |                                                                                                       |
|                            |                                               |                                                                                                       |
|                            |                                               |                                                                                                       |
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## TASK 2

Now plan and then write up a short piece of writing, about 500 words long, starting with the words: ‘I come from...’ (Use techniques like Bryson’s when you write this and ensure the work you bring in Sept is a second draft, thoroughly checked for accuracy and neatness, by both you and another pair of eyes.)

## PLANNING

- Describe your hometown or village?
- Use your senses: What does it look like/ sound like/ smell like etc.?
- What are the people like there? (*Any interesting characters?*)
- Any interesting buildings or landmarks?
- Is it busy/slow/noisy/quiet/picturesque/ugly/clean/dirty/ friendly/hostile etc.?
- How does your town make you feel?
- What do you like about your town? / What do you dislike about it?

## TASK 3

Re-read the Bryson extract for the following grammatical features.

Find and jot down examples of the following word-classes and log on to [Englishgrammar.org](http://Englishgrammar.org) each time, to obtain linguistic definitions for each technical term.



### 1. 5 examples of proper nouns?

· *EnglishGrammar.org definition:*

### 2. 5 examples of common nouns?

· *EnglishGrammar.org definition:*

### 3. 5 examples of abstract nouns?

· *EnglishGrammar.org definition:*

### 4. 5 examples of verbs in the text?

· *EnglishGrammar.org definition:*

## 5. 5 examples of adjectives?

· *EnglishGrammar.org definition:*

## 6. 3 examples of adverbs?

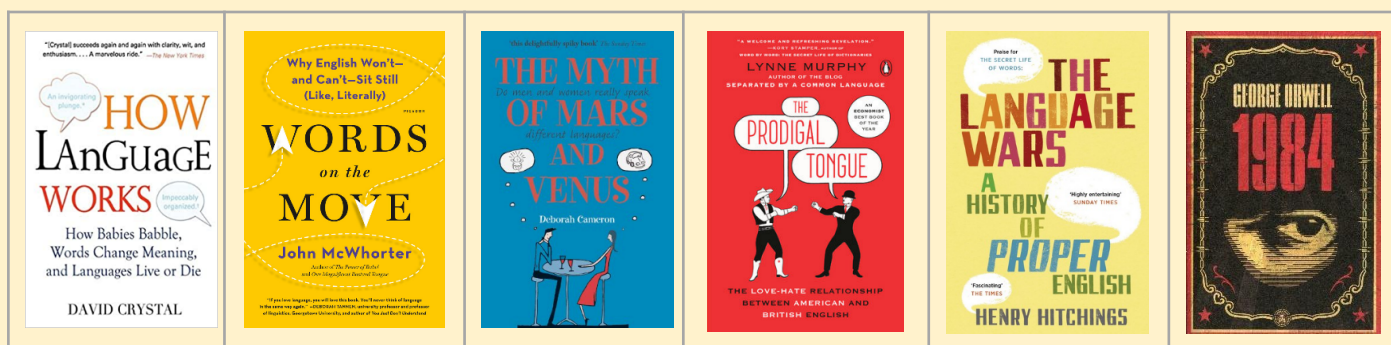
· *EnglishGrammar.org definition:*

# EXTRA INFO: to read through only

## Welcome to English Language

We look forward to you coming to Varndean College in September and starting your course in English. We have put together this resource-sheet for you to pick and choose books or articles to read, podcasts to listen to or programmes to watch over the coming weeks.

### Good books



### Podcasts

*Press on any of the links below, which are all LIVE*

BBC Radio 4's [Word of Mouth](#) programme

Some recent highlights have been selected for you:

- [American English: A debate about English](#)
- [Will Emoji Be the Future of English?](#)
- [The Language of Lying](#)
- [Romani Language](#)
- [Black British Identity and Black-related Words](#)
- [Solving Crime with Language](#)
- [Language, Gender and Trans Identities](#)

### BBC programme, 'The Verb'

- [Puns and Wordplay](#)
- [Sports Writing](#)
- [How to Write Out Sexism](#)

### 'Lexicon Valley'

- [Women's Language](#)
- [Like, Sort Of...](#)

## Useful sources for articles about language

| Emag                                                                              | The Guardian                                                                      | The Daily Mail                                                                     | The Conversation                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |

## University-style lectures

### Ted Talks/TV programmes

- [Lera Boroditsky on the links between language and thought](#)
- [Deb Roy on children's language development](#)
- [Anne Curzan on what makes a word 'real'](#)
- [Erin McKean on making up new words](#)
- [Claire Bower on where English comes from](#)
- [John McWhorter on made-up languages in sci-fi and fantasy](#)
- [Planet Word https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xqa1zt](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xqa1zt)

## Online Courses

If you are feeling like you really want to immerse yourself in some language study over the next few months, **Future Learn** has a selection of online courses you can sign up for, including some excellent ones on Language and Linguistics.

- [Introduction to Intercultural Studies: Language and Culture](#)
- [Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Accents, Attitudes and Identity](#)

Please make notes on any interesting ideas/info that you come across as they will be useful throughout your studies in English at Varndean.

For now, take care and see you soon.

Tess and Amy.

The skills you gain through studying English are marketable in most sectors

| Job options directly related to English include:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Jobs where <i>English</i> would be useful include:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Magazine journalist<br>Newspaper journalist<br>Digital copywriter<br>Editorial assistant<br>English as a foreign language teacher<br>Lexicographer ( <i>a compiler of dictionaries</i> )<br>Private tutor<br>Publishing copy-editor/proof-reader<br>Secondary school or college teacher<br>Web content manager<br>Writer<br>Speech therapist | Academic librarian<br>Advertising copywriter<br>Archivist<br>Arts administrator<br>Education consultant<br>Information officer<br>Learning mentor<br>Marketing executive<br>Media researcher<br>PPC specialist ( <i>Internet advertiser</i> )<br>Primary school teacher<br>Public relations officer<br>Records manager<br>Social media manager<br>TV & film production |

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING LIST**

***Keep reading throughout the course, to improve your vocabulary, sentence-structure and imaginative skills, not to mention your knowledge about language and the world itself.***

**George Orwell:** 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' (*A dystopian novel exploring a world in which language and thought are controlled by the state.*)

**Anthony Burgess:** 'A Clockwork Orange' (*A nightmarish vision of a future world, written in a highly creative mix of languages, in which Alex and his droogs wreak havoc, until the state steps in to force him to comply.*)

**Emma Donoghue:** 'Room' (*Written from the perspective of a child at the telegraphic speech-stage, this examines a mother and child, released from abduction and how they cope with the world beyond the room in which they were confined for years.*)

**Melvyn Bragg:** 'The Adventure of English' (*This book is at the heart of the Language Change course in Year 2 and gives a fascinating insight into 2000 years of language-change.*)

**Bill Bryson:** 'Mother Tongue' (*A highly entertaining book about the English language from the American writer of 'The Thunderbolt Kid'*)

**Julian Norridge:** 'Can We Have our Balls Back, please?' (*An amusing history of the language of sport*)

**David Crystal:** 'A Little Book of Language' (*A highly readable, accessible and entertaining overview of the English language in all its forms: a good one to start with*)

**David Crystal:** 'The History of English in 100 Words' (*An entertaining and readable chat about how 100 words of ours have changed in meaning and use over time*)

**David Crystal:** 'The Encyclopaedia of the English Language' (*A core reference book for this course. If you see one in a second-hand bookshop, grab it.*)

**David Crystal:** 'Talk to your Child' (*A user-friendly guide to child language acquisition*)

**Caitlin Moran:** 'How to be a Woman' (*An accessible start to the Gender unit, answering the questions plaguing modern women*)

**Angela Goddard:** 'Doing English Language' *(A short but comprehensive linguistic book for students)*

**Stephen Pinker:** 'The Language Instinct' *(How language makes meaning: good for the brain cells.)*

**Dan Clayton:** 'Language: A Student Handbook on Key Topics and Theories' *(A useful collection of essays and articles to widen student-understanding of key topics)*

**Deborah Tannen:** 'Conversational Style: Analysing Talk amongst Friends' *(A guide to understanding how and why we speak)*

**Deborah Tannen:** 'You just don't understand. Women and Men in Conversation' *(An interesting exploration of gendered speech-styles)*

**Larry Trask:** 'Language the Basics' *(An intelligent and easy-to-read discussion of a range of linguistic issues)*

**Larry Trask:** 'Linguistics: A Graphic Guide' *(The origins and evolution of language and grammar over time in bite-size sections)*

**Larry Trask:** 'Introducing Linguistics' *(An accessible starter-guide with a helpful section of language acquisition)*

**Blogs:**

- [EngLangBlog](#): Dan Clayton's up-to-date postings and discussion aimed at students studying English Language A-Level
- [Separated by a Common Language](#): An excellent blog by Lynne Murphy, Professor of Linguistics at Sussex University, focusing on the differences between British and American English
- [World Wide Words](#): Michael Quinion's eye-opening observations on words and expressions in the English Language