

Preparing for English Language A Level

One of the important aspects of English Language is considering the importance of genre, and how writers write for different audiences or purposes. Genre simply means a type or category of text, that involves a particular set of characteristics. A great way to prepare for English Language A Level is to read as wide a range of genres as possible. You may want to collect some examples, and identify what you think the important features of the genre are. Here are some suggestions to get you started (you might think of some other genres yourself):

- Charity leaflet
- A transcript of a political speech
- Fiction – horror / supernatural
- Broadsheet newspaper article
- Tabloid newspaper article
- Newspaper opinion piece
- Travel writing – website, newspaper or magazine
- Instructions e.g. assembly instructions
- Film or theatre review



Another important aspect of English Language A Level is to consider some key language issues. Here is a Ted Talk playlist with videos related to the wider issues we will consider in our study of language.

The importance of language and how we acquire language

Why language is humanity's greatest invention

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_peterson_why_language_is_humanity_s_greatest_invention?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Civilization rests upon the existence of language, says language creator David Peterson. In a talk that's equal parts passionate and hilarious, he shows how studying, preserving and inventing new languages helps us understand our collective humanity -- and gives a quick lesson on High Valyrian, one of two languages he created for "Game of Thrones" (along with Dothraki). "Language is not merely a tool," he says. "It is our legacy, it's our way of conveying what it means to be human."

How language transformed humanity

https://www.ted.com/talks/mark_pagel_how_language_transformed_humanity?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Biologist Mark Pagel shares an intriguing theory about why humans evolved our complex system of language. He suggests that language is a piece of "social technology" that allowed early human tribes to access a powerful new tool: cooperation.

The linguistic genius of babies

https://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Patricia Kuhl shares astonishing findings about how babies learn one language over another -- by listening to the humans around them and "taking statistics" on the sounds they need to know. Clever lab experiments (and brain scans) show how 6-month-old babies use sophisticated reasoning to understand their world.

The benefits of a bilingual brain

https://www.ted.com/talks/mia_nacamulli_the_benefits_of_a_bilingual_brain?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

It's obvious that knowing more than one language can make certain things easier — like traveling or watching movies without subtitles. But are there other advantages to having a bilingual (or multilingual) brain? Mia Nacamulli details the three types of bilingual brains and shows how knowing more than one language keeps your brain healthy, complex and actively engaged.

Grammar and semantics

What makes a word "real"?

https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_curzan_what_makes_a_word_real?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

One could argue that slang words like 'hangry,' 'defriend' and 'adorkable' fill crucial meaning gaps in the English language, even if they don't appear in the dictionary. After all, who actually decides which words make it into those pages? Language historian Anne Curzan gives a charming look at the humans behind dictionaries, and the choices they make.

Does grammar matter?

https://www.ted.com/talks/andreea_s_calude_does_grammar_matter?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

It can be hard sometimes, when speaking, to remember all of the grammatical rules that guide us when we're writing. When is it right to say "the dog and me" and when should it be "the dog and I"? Does it even matter? Andreea S. Calude dives into the age-old argument between linguistic prescriptivists and descriptivists — who have two very different opinions on the matter.

A brief history of plural word...s

https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_a_brief_history_of_plural_word_s?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

All it takes is a simple S to make most English words plural. But it hasn't always worked that way (and there are, of course, exceptions). John McWhorter looks back to the good old days when English was newly split from German -- and books, names and eggs were beek, namen and eggru!

The History of language and language change

Where did English come from?

https://www.ted.com/talks/claire_bowern_where_did_english_come_from

When we talk about 'English', we often think of it as a single language. But what do the dialects spoken in dozens of countries around the world have in common with each other, or

with the writings of Chaucer? Claire Bower traces the language from the present day back to its ancient roots, showing how English has evolved through generations of speakers. [Directed by Patrick Smith, narrated by Addison Anderson].

How did English evolve?

https://www.ted.com/talks/kate_gardoqui_how_did_english_evolve?utm_campaign=tedsprea&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

What is the difference between "a hearty welcome" and "a cordial reception"? In a brief, action-packed history of the English language, Kate Gardoqui explains why these semantically equal phrases evoke such different images. [Directed by Ben Tobitt, narrated by Kate Gardoqui].

Language and identity

What our language habits reveal

https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_what_our_language_habits_reveal?utm_campaign=tedsprea&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

In an exclusive preview of his book *The Stuff of Thought*, Steven Pinker looks at language and how it expresses what goes on in our minds -- and how the words we choose communicate much more than we realize.

How language shapes the way we think

https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think?utm_campaign=tedsprea&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

There are about 7,000 languages spoken around the world -- and they all have different sounds, vocabularies and structures. But do they shape the way we think? Cognitive scientist Lera Boroditsky shares examples of language -- from an Aboriginal community in Australia that uses cardinal directions instead of left and right to the multiple words for blue in Russian -- that suggest the answer is a resounding yes. "The beauty of linguistic diversity is that it reveals to us just how ingenious and how flexible the human mind is," Boroditsky says. "Human minds have invented not one cognitive universe, but 7,000."

Language and power

The Right to understand

https://www.ted.com/talks/sandra_fisher_martins_the_right_to_understand?utm_campaign=tedsprea&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Medical, legal, and financial documents should be easy to read, but too often they aren't. With spot-on (and funny) examples, Sandra Fisher Martins shows how overly complex language separates us from the information we need -- and three steps to change that. In Portuguese with English subtitles.

Why journalists have an obligation to challenge power

https://www.ted.com/talks/jorge_ramos_why_journalists_have_an_obligation_to_challenge_power?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

You can kick Jorge Ramos out of your press conference (as Donald Trump infamously did in 2015), but you can never silence him. A reporter for more than 30 years, Ramos believes that a journalist's responsibility is to question and challenge those in power. In this compelling talk -- which earned him a standing ovation midway through -- Ramos explains why, in certain circumstances, he believes journalists must take sides. (In Spanish with English subtitles)

What's a snollygoster? A short lesson in political speak

https://www.ted.com/talks/mark_forsyth_what_s_a_snollygoster_a_short_lesson_in_political_speak?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Most politicians choose their words carefully, to shape the reality they hope to create. But does it work? Etymologist Mark Forsyth shares a few entertaining word-origin stories from British and American history (for instance, did you ever wonder how George Washington became "president"?) and draws a surprising conclusion.

How to deconstruct racism, one headline at a time

https://www.ted.com/talks/baratunde_thurston_how_to_deconstruct_racism_one_headline_at_a_time?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Baratunde Thurston explores the phenomenon of white Americans calling the police on black Americans who have committed the crimes of ... eating, walking or generally "living while black." In this profound, thought-provoking and often hilarious talk, he reveals the power of language to change stories of trauma into stories of healing -- while challenging us all to level up.

Standard and non-standard English

Txtng is killing language. JK!!!

https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_txtng_is_killing_language_jk?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Does texting mean the death of good writing skills? John McWhorter posits that there's much more to texting -- linguistically, culturally -- than it seems, and it's all good news.

TEDxEastEnd - Paul Kerswill - Who's an Eastender now?

<https://youtu.be/hAnFbJ65KYM>

Paul Kerswill is committed to understanding how language is moulded by the societies in which it is spoken. His latest research is a long-term study of 'Multicultural London English' in the East End -- misleadingly dubbed 'Jafaican' by the media. He has the dubious honour of being the first dialectologist to be lampooned on the Now Show.