

# GCSE English Language and English Literature

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**Hub network meeting**

Empowering students through vocabulary: Part 1 – Reading

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# Starter activity

## Facts and figures about vocabulary

Have a read of these facts and figures. Do any surprise you? Which ones resonate with you most? Do you agree/disagree?

*'43% of Year 7 pupils have a limited vocabulary'<sup>1</sup>*

*'A lack of time spent reading for pleasure is a root cause'<sup>2</sup>*

*'The word gap is increasing'<sup>3</sup>*

*'Children with language difficulties at age 5 are four times more likely to have reading difficulties in adulthood, three times as likely to have mental health problems, and twice as likely to be unemployed when they reach adulthood'<sup>4</sup>*

*'The size of a child's vocabulary is the best predictor of success'<sup>5</sup>*

*'Students need 50,000 words to thrive in school. That is 'receptive' vocabulary (words they know well enough to have a degree of understanding) as opposed to 'productive' vocabulary (words they use every day) – we use a really small vocabulary in (our) daily lives.'<sup>6</sup>*

*'We use the most frequent 100 words in English language 50% of the time.'<sup>7</sup>*

*'Research indicates that anything between four and 10 exposures for a new word can best establish a word long-term memory'<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Why Closing the Word Gap Matters: Oxford Language Report*, OUP, 2018

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1: 95% of secondary teachers who completed the survey expressed this view.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1: 69% of primary school teachers and 60% of secondary school teachers who completed the survey expressed this view.

<sup>4</sup> Law, J. et al, p.7, *OUN report*, 2017

<sup>5</sup> *Why Closing the Word Gap Matters: Oxford Language Report*, OUP, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Quigley A, *Mr Barton Maths Podcast*, 9 March 2019

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 6

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 6

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# Closing the vocabulary gap: is it a whole school matter?

Case study: Handsworth Grange Community Sports College

**This is a case study from one school that believes closing the word gap is a whole school effort.**

# Case study: Handsworth Grange Community Sports College

Handsworth Grange Community Sports College is a secondary school (for ages 11–16) with 1,012 pupils on roll. 38% of pupils are entitled to the Pupil Premium and 42% speak English as additional language (EAL). In October 2017, Ofsted found the school to be outstanding in all areas.

## The word gap at Handsworth Grange

The word gap poses a significant challenge for staff at Handsworth Grange. A large proportion of pupils start Year 7 with vocabulary that is limited to an extent that it could potentially affect academic achievement. Low levels of vocabulary can also impact on pupils' confidence resulting in some becoming disengaged.

## Closing the word gap

In light of the increased demands of the reformed GCSEs in English Language and Literature, the English Department implemented a targeted programme. For one hour per week, all Year 7 pupils participate in an additional English lesson, focusing on:

- an increased exposure to a range of unseen texts
- exploring thinking about texts
- building language for discussion of texts.

## Whole-school strategies

Concerns about low levels of vocabulary raised by the English Department were shared by the school as a whole. As a result, in September 2017, Handsworth Grange implemented a whole-school programme focusing on vocabulary, reading and comprehension.

- Vocabulary is explicitly taught in all subjects. New words are introduced and revisited a number of times in a lesson, ideally in different ways.
- Pupils are encouraged to read aloud across all subject areas. Staff use brief comprehension questions to determine what pupils have and have not understood.
- Staff develop pupils' oral language by:
  - expecting answers in full sentences
  - scaffolding pupils' answers
  - allowing pupils time to rehearse their thoughts
  - encouraging pupils to think about their use of fillers, such as "innit"
  - repeating pupils' answers using synonyms, especially more academic ones.

## Focus on reading

Negative attitudes to reading can be a barrier to overcoming the word gap. As such, staff recognise the importance of fostering an enjoyment of reading throughout the school.

Pupils are read to twice a week in tutor time. Hearing an adult who understands the text reading aloud can help to build vocabulary. Through these tutor group sessions, pupils encounter around 15 additional texts by Year 11.

## Signs of progress

It is not yet possible for staff at Handsworth Grange to undertake a detailed analysis of the impact of strategies designed to close the word gap. However, teachers have already observed a number of improvements.

- An increase in reading ages, especially among pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium.
- An improvement in the quality and fluency of written work.
- Increased confidence and engagement.

*"Literacy is developed extremely well across the curriculum. The teachers' consistent approach is clearly focused on improving pupils' vocabulary, comprehension and reading skills. Consequently, teachers actively increase the range of language that pupils can use, including subject-specific terms. As a result of this effective practice, pupils gain confidence, understand more complex texts and respond more fully to examination questions."*

Ofsted Report, October 2017

# Focus on reading

Why are reading and vocabulary so intrinsically linked?

*'Children with better vocab have better reading comprehension'*

K. Chain and J. V. Oakhill, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

*'Limited vocabulary means that these children will be at a disadvantage in areas of the school curriculum, particularly reading.'*

Reedy, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

A child without words will often...	Let's just think about what that means for the child...
Only ever learn the "mechanical" process of reading – decoding words without finding meaning and never really getting to the "pleasure" bit of reading at all	That's right – this poor child may never choose to do the one thing guaranteed to increase the breadth and depth of their vocabulary. (The word you're looking for isn't irony, it's TRAGEDY!)

Excerpt from Quincey, *OUP*, 2018

*'Whether a child is 11 years old and in Year 7, or 16 years old and in Year 11, if there are words in a task that they do not understand, they will struggle to complete the task.'*

Bolton, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

*'Language acquisition and reading are closely linked – the better a child's language knowledge and richer their vocab, the more likely they are to understand texts they read'*

J. Clements, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

# Activity

██████████ by Chinua Achebe

In the greyness  
and drizzle of one ██████████  
██████████ by ██████████  
of ██████████ a ██████████  
perching high on  
bones of a dead tree  
██████████ close to his  
██████████  
██████████  
██████████, i  
to hers. Yesterday they ██████████  
the eyes of a swollen  
██████████ in a ██████████  
██████████ and ate the  
things in its ██████████. ██████████ they chose  
their ██████████  
keeping the ██████████ in ██████████  
of cold  
██████████ eyes...

Strange  
indeed how ██████████  
██████████  
██████████  
██████████

██████████!  
.. ██████████ the ██████████ at ██████████  
██████████ going home for  
the day with ██████████  
██████████ clinging  
██████████ to his hairy  
nostrils will stop  
at the ██████████ sweet-shop  
and pick up a chocolate  
for his ██████████  
waiting at home for Daddy's  
return...

Praise ██████████  
██████████ if you will  
that grants even an ogre  
a tiny ██████████  
tenderness ██████████  
in ██████████ of a cruel  
heart or else ██████████  
for in the very germ  
of that ██████████ love is  
██████████ the ██████████  
of evil



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(The full version of the poem has been removed temporarily due to pending copyright permission.)

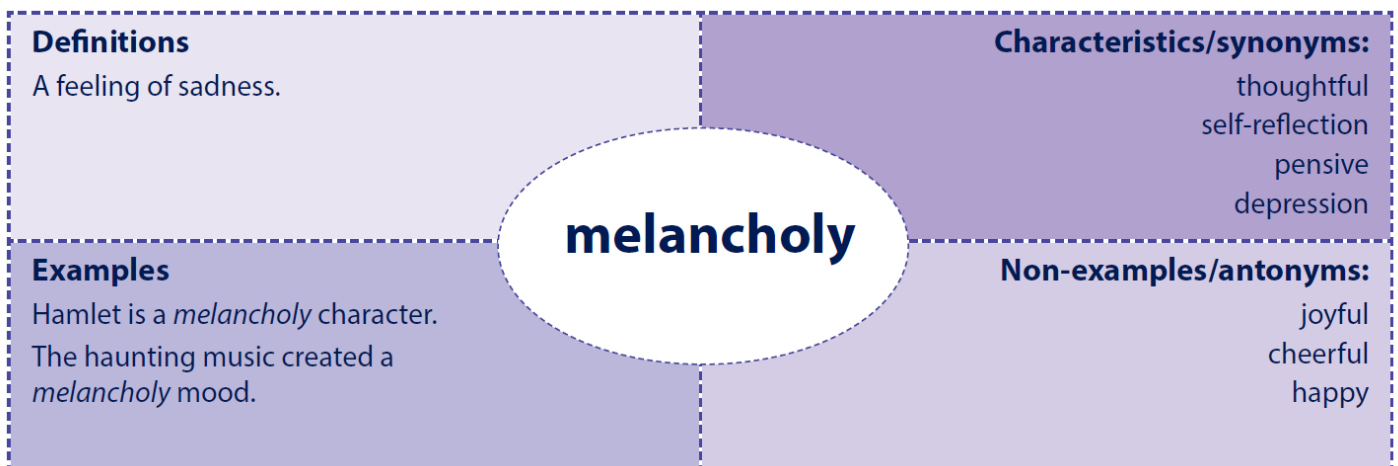
# Strategies for the classroom

Using *Vultures* as a stimulus why not try one or two of the strategies below?

Below we have sampled a few of the many strategies suggested by Teachit in their resource [Closing the word gap: activities for the classroom](#) which can be used to develop students' confidence in learning new words.

## The Frayer model

Use a Frayer model template (like the one below) for new words.



Try this with one of the more challenging words from *Vultures*.

Definitions:			Synonyms:
Examples:			Antonyms:

## Call my bluff

Experiment with Call My Bluff definitions. Students work in two pairs with one pair creating four definitions for a specific word but only one definition is correct. The other pair tries to work out the correct definition.

## Exploring etymology and morphology

This fascinating area of language study encourages students to investigate the words they encounter and spot patterns. Knowing root words and common prefixes could help students decode unfamiliar words in an unseen text. For example, if a student knew that *odor* is a Latin root meaning smell or scent and that *mal* means bad, they could work out the meaning of malodorous (smelling bad!).

Choose a challenging word from *Vultures* and use an etymological dictionary (such as [Etymonline](#)) to uncover its root meaning (try 'kindred' for example).

## Informed guesswork

Give students an extract with unfamiliar words and ask them to work out the meanings. Place an emphasis on informed guesswork, using the context of the word to help in working out the meaning. They could use a table to record their ideas:

Word	My definition guess	Dictionary definition	Definition in my own words with example

# Assessment of reading

Although reading might appear effortless (especially for teachers) it is a complex process involving many different skills.

Below is a reference showing where students are assessed on their ability to demonstrate understanding of the meaning of words/language. We have listed different question styles that are designed to assess particular reading skills as defined by the assessment objectives. Consider the progression from Entry Level to GCSE and how the level of demand is reflected in the construction of the question.

## Step Up to English (ELC)

### Text coverage:

**Comp 1 Literacy topics:** Three reading tasks on three transactional, thematically linked texts. 'Real-life' texts such as articles, adverts, posters, leaflets and web pages.

**Comp 2 Creative reading and writing:** Two thematically linked literary texts (fiction or literary non-fiction), including articles, letters, extracts from novels and short stories. At Gold step this will include a 19<sup>th</sup> century text.

AO	Sample question styles	Paper reference
AO1 Read and understand a range of texts. Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.	Circle the correct answer to the questions below. One has been done for you.  Fill in the table below. The first and last rows have been done for you.	Silver Comp 1
	Complete the table below by ticking whether the statements are true or false.  Write two things from the [TEXT] about the effects of X?	Gold Comp 1
	List three things that ...  Tick whether the statements below are true or false. One has been done for you.  Who... What... When... Where.... How many... Why... questions	Silver Comp 2

	<p>List <b>four</b> things from this part of the text that you learned about X.</p> <p>List four things that the writer says in this part of the text about X.</p> <p>Complete the following passage by filling in <b>one</b> word in each space.</p>	Gold Comp 2
AO2 Explain and comment on how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support views.	Explain why the [WRITER] used these words in the [TEXT]. One has been done for you	Silver Comp 1
	Give three ways that the information in the extract is organised to make it clear and helpful.	Gold Comp 1
	<p>Choose two words the writer uses to describe X from the boxes below. Why are they good words to use?</p> <p>Look at line X of the story, '[INSERT LINE]'. Which of these words show you what X was feeling and why?</p>	Silver Comp 2
	<p>Choose two words or phrases that are used by [WRITER] in this part of the text which tell you how he/she felt.</p> <p>For each word or phrase, say why you think the word or phrase is a good one to use.</p> <p>Look at the short extracts below. What do you think is good about the language in each extract?</p> <p>Choose two words or phrases from [TEXT] that show X.</p>	Gold Comp 2

## Functional Skills (new) Level 1 (8720) Level 2 (8725)

### Text coverage:

**Paper 1 Reading:** Learners will be required to respond to three reading sources. These will be straightforward texts on a range of topics of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain or persuade. At Level 2 learners will also need to engage with some complex texts.

*(Note the following examples have been taken from the available specimen papers.)*

Scope of study	Level 1	Sample question styles
3.1.1	Identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts	<p>Using the information in <b>Source A</b>, put a tick in the correct box to show whether each statement about travel agents is <b>true</b> or <b>false</b>.</p> <p>In <b>Source B</b>, identify one positive thing and one negative thing about being a travel agent.</p> <p>What does 'Last admission to the park is one hour before stated closing time' mean?            A You cannot come into the park earlier than one hour before it closes.            B You cannot come into the park later than one hour before it closes.            C You have to come to the park one hour before it closes.            D You have to leave the park one hour before it closes.</p> <p>Your local school is planning a day-trip to Blackgang Chine.            Write a note for the Headteacher, giving her the most important information she needs to help her to organise and plan the day-trip.</p>
3.1.3	Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion	Using the information in <b>Source C</b> , put a tick in the correct box to show whether each statement is <b>fact</b> or <b>opinion</b> .
3.1.5	Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (eg using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words	You are advised to use a dictionary for this question <b>Source A</b> states, 'You don't need any specific qualifications to become a travel agent'. The word 'specific' means

3.1.8	Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (eg formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory and persuasive)	The writing in Source A A explains B instructs C persuades
3.1.9	Read and understand a range of specialist words in context	Gemma Antrobus is the senior travel agent. What does the word 'senior' tell us about Gemma? A She enjoys being a travel agent B She has the most experience in the team C She is ten years older than her colleagues D She works longer hours than her colleagues

Scope of study	Level 2	Sample question styles
3.1.13	Identify implicit and inferred meaning in texts	<p>The webpage implies that: A only families of four can go on this safari B London Heathrow is preferred to regional airports C breakfast in bed is provided at an additional cost D this holiday experience is very special.</p> <p>According to Source B Responsible Travel A approves some holidays which are expensive B cares more about local people than tourists C is less efficient than travel agents D teaches tourists the local language.</p> <p>The Customer Director of Responsible Travel said that the company creates better places for local people to live. List three ways in which local communities benefit from holidays approved by Responsible Travel.</p> <p>Source B gives details on the role of local guides who work with Responsible Travel. List three skills a local guide needs for this role.</p>
3.1.15	Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (eg glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources	<p>You are advised to use a dictionary for this question. Source A states, '...the abundant wildlife – including black rhino, ostriches...' The word 'abundant' means A dangerous B endangered C exciting D plentiful</p>

3.1.17	Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias	Compare <b>Source A</b> and <b>Source C</b> in terms of what they say and how the material is conveyed. You may wish to refer to the level of detail, presentation and language, formality, possible bias and how the writers come across.
3.1.18	Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion	The writer of Source A presents both facts and opinions about the Safari and Beach Tour. Identify two facts about the Safari and Beach Tour. Identify two opinions about the Safari and Beach Tour.

## GCSE English Language

### Text coverage

Learners will engage with a wide range of high quality, challenging texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Texts are unseen and will be drawn from across a range of genres relating to real and relevant contexts.

**Paper 1 Section A:** One reading source; an extract from a prose fiction text (novel or short story), drawn from either the 20th or 21st century. The text could focus on openings, endings, narrative perspectives and points of view, narrative or descriptive passages, character, atmospheric descriptions and other appropriate narrative and descriptive approaches.

**Paper 2 Section A:** Two linked sources from different time periods and genres (non-fiction and literary non-fiction). The sources will be drawn from the 19th century, and **either** the 20th or 21st century depending on the time period assessed in Paper 1 in each particular series. Choice of genre will include high quality journalism, articles, reports, essays, travel writing, accounts, letters, diaries, autobiography and biographical passages etc.

AO	Sample question styles	Paper reference
AO1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas</li> <li>select and synthesise evidence from different texts</li> </ul>	Read again the first part of the source, from <b>lines 1 to X</b> . List <b>four</b> things about X from this part of the source.	Paper 1 Q1
	Read again the first part of <b>Source X</b> from <b>lines 1 to X</b> . Choose <b>four</b> statements below which are <b>true</b> .	Paper 2 Q1
	You need to refer to <b>Source A</b> and <b>Source B</b>	Paper 2 Q2



	<p>for this question.  The writers in Source A and Source B are [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION].  Use details from <b>both</b> sources to write a summary of what you understand about X.</p>	
<p>AO2  Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views</p>	<p>Look in detail at this extract, from <b>lines X to X</b> of the source  How does the writer use language here to describe X?  You could include the writer's choice of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• words and phrases</li> <li>• language features and techniques</li> <li>• sentence forms.</li> </ul> <p>You now need to think about the <b>whole</b> of the source.  This text is from the beginning/middle/end of a story.  How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?</p> <p>You now need to refer only to <b>Source X</b> from <b>lines X to X</b>.  How does the writer use language to describe X?</p>	<p>Paper 1 Q2</p> <p>Paper 1 Q3</p> <p>Paper 2 Q3</p>

# GCSE English Literature

## Text coverage:

Learners will engage with a wide range of classic literature in different genres and in doing so will be encouraged to acquire and use a wide vocabulary, develop the habit of reading widely and often, and appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage.

**Paper 1:** Learners study one Shakespeare play (from a choice of six texts) and a 19th century novel (from a choice of seven).

**Paper 2:** Learners study one modern (post-1914) prose or drama text (from a choice of 12), one cluster of 15 poems (ranging from 1789 and the present day), and a range of poetry in preparation for responding to two thematically linked unseen poems in the exam.

Unlike GCSE English Language, the questions in the exam papers do not assess discrete skills. Instead the AOs are applied holistically.

AO	Sample question styles	Paper reference
<b>AO1</b> Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response</li> <li>use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.</li> </ul>	Starting with this extract/moment in the play/conversation/speech, explore how [THE WRITER] presents X  Write about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how Shakespeare presents X in this extract</li> <li>how Shakespeare presents X in the play as a whole.</li> </ul>	Paper 1 Sections A and B
	How far does [AUTHOR] present...? How does [AUTHOR] explore the importance of...? How does [AUTHOR] use the character of X to explore ideas about X? How far do you agree that...? “[STATEMENT]” How far do you agree with this view...?	Paper 2 Section A
<b>AO2</b> Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate	Compare how poets present ideas about X in ‘[POEM]’ and in <b>one</b> other poem from ‘[POETRY CLUSTER]’.	Paper 2 Section B
	In ‘[POEM]’ how does the poet present the speaker’s attitudes to X?	Paper 2 Section C
	What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present X?	

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# Examiners' feedback

The following comments have been lifted from the 2018 and 2019 reports on the exams.

## GCSE English Language

### Paper 1 Question 2

'Some students looked for the connotations of words without a consideration of context, eg they saw the use of 'fever' in the phrase 'whole classes swept away in the fever' as something negative because fevers are bad, and were not able to recognise that Mr Fisher was recollecting a positive memory of when he found the enjoyment of reading to be infectious, even contagious, among his classes. Students need to remember that their comments have to be precise and contextualised in order to achieve Level 3 or above.' (2018)

'The need to contextualise the selection in relation to the passage has been understood by many centres, but not all. Some students explored the effect of 'thin' but then went on to say that Hartop was 'fat' because he was 'sprawling'. Linking the understanding together, contextualising the individual words as part of a longer passage, will often avoid misinterpretation.' (2019)

### Paper 2 Question 3

'For the first time in a live exam, the 19th century source was used as the basis for the language question. The text was typical of a more informal Victorian style, as one would expect in a letter to a family member, although there were plenty of multi-clausal complex sentences to present a reading challenge. These did not, however, prove to be an obstacle to students, and they engaged well with both the vocabulary and the language features used.' (2018)

'Those working at Levels 1 and 2 were able to select words such as 'majestically' and, even without knowing its exact meaning, were able to use contextual clues to comment on how this word made the surfers seem impressive or magical. References were sometimes made to unicorns and knights, as well as more religious or royal figures in an attempt to comment on effect.' (2018)

'Too many students offered generalised comments on the symbolic effect of colour. The waves in the source were not white because they were innocent, pure, angelic or fragile. This type of 'one size fits all' approach to colour analysis does not support students in making clear, contextualised, specific comments on the effects of writers' choices of language.' (2019)

The best level 4 responses often included perceptive comments which took a conceptualised approach to the language chosen by the writer and discussed those choices within a framework of 'big ideas'. They were able to take words such as 'bottomless' and set that choice of adjective within their understanding of the concept of infinity. Similarly, students demonstrated an understanding of the writer being sucked into the belly of the wave in terms of the endless battle between man and nature, concluding that man is only ever at a disadvantage because of the imbalance of power.' (2019)

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# GCSE English Literature

## Paper 1 Shakespeare and 19th century novel

'It is perhaps the case that students find the prose of the 19th century novel dense with powerful language and are clearly well drilled in analysing this, but are less confident in making connections to the broader themes of the texts. The reverse tends to apply in Section A where they have a strong grasp of character, plot and the themes they embody, but find the language more challenging.' (2018)

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# Reading confidence

## What can be achieved if you're confident in your knowledge?

Write down one memorable line or phrase from a Shakespeare play of your choice (anywhere in the play by any character). It doesn't have to be word-perfect!

1. What is the line/phrase saying? What does it mean? What do the words mean? Are there any interesting word choices or imagery perhaps?
2. Which character says the line? Which character are they saying it to? Or is it part of a soliloquy and only the audience hears this line? What does it reveal about the character at this point in time?
3. Where does this line come in the sequence of events in the play? Is it near the beginning, middle or end? Why is that moment significant? Is it a climatic or a pivotal moment? Is it signalling some change or shift in the action or mood? Is it introducing a new character?
4. What do you think Shakespeare's intentions were? How and why is he manipulating the audience at that moment in the play? What is he trying to achieve?
5. Why that line, said by that character, at that precise moment in the play? How does it link to a wider theme or concept?

## Which texts do we perceive to be the most challenging?

### How do we approach unfamiliar texts?

'Vocabulary is an unconstrained skill: we learn the meanings of new words throughout our lifetime, and an important source of new word learning is written text. This is because written texts are a much richer source of new words than spoken language; they have less common vocabulary than does every spoken language, so they afford more opportunities for learning new vocabulary.'

Cain and Oakhill, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

'Whether that is pronouncing a word that they've learned from a book incorrectly, or using the wrong word when writing. This can lead children to be fearful about taking a chance on a more adventurous word choice. Children need to be encouraged to play with language and sometimes get it wrong.'

Clements, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

### Discussion point

- How do you introduce texts to your classroom?
- How do you talk and behave when introducing texts that you or the students perceive to be challenging?
- What's the tone or atmosphere in the classroom?

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## Avoiding common mistakes and misunderstandings

This is an extract from *Closing the word gap: activities for the classroom* by Teachit.

### Advice for teachers

Keep your own record of students' common vocabulary mistakes and misunderstandings. For example:

- using the term paragraph instead of stanza for poetry
- referring to a sentence of poetry rather than a line
- using the verb quote instead of the noun quotation
- referring to the reader when writing about a play, instead of the audience.

Students frequently encounter misunderstandings when tackling Shakespearean vocabulary. It's important to teach students explicitly about Shakespeare's language to give them strategies for deciphering the text. It can be helpful to remind students that some familiar words that Shakespeare used have since changed their meaning (eg the word silly meant innocent or simple, and luxurious meant lustful).

Even students with a wide vocabulary can use complex words incorrectly. Model a growth mindset by talking about mistakes you've made as a teacher and how you've learned to cope with specialist vocabulary in your subject. Stress that mistakes and misunderstanding are a natural result of learning any new words.

### Suggested strategies for correcting these mistakes and misunderstandings

- **Spot the mistakes.** Give students sample paragraphs where the words have been used incorrectly. Students highlight the mistakes and discuss why they are incorrect.
- **Malapropisms.** Introduce students to the idea of malapropisms (a lovely new bit of vocabulary) and show them amusing examples from film, Twitter, and YouTube, etc.

### Independent learning tasks

- **Social media.** Provide students with examples from social media and see if they can 'study' these to spot the misuse of words. Politicians like Trump are often a good source.
- **Aides-memoire.** Ask students to create their own memory aids for remembering tricky vocabulary such as creating their own posters with doodles and images.

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# Shakespeare

## Free resources from The Globe

### Strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT)

The teacher could set up a gallery around the classroom showing quotations (of varying length and complexity) from actors/directors/students about learning/speaking/pronouncing Shakespearean language:

'I now like to imagine moving through soliloquies with an audience like you move through a landscape; over hills, round corners, to dead ends, backing up again, realising you have to go again through that river, there, then being wet for a few lines because you have gone through a river and you are in a different place. It's the sense of taking an audience in the present through this text that becomes paramount.' – Mark Rylance (actor)

'Actors have many different approaches but for me, increasingly, the rhythm of the verse provides me with a blueprint for how to perform a scene. It is a starting point from which to explore the text and to create my interpretation of a character.' – Yolande Vasquez (actor)

'Sometimes you might work on a section of the play which rather than the words the movement of the character is telling that subtext. So you might work with that actor to create a string of movement...with movement or choreography, they might break into dance or a piece of movement which may be expressive of how they're feeling. A lot of the time we use movement to storytell.'  
– Georgina Lamb (Choreographer)

'I think the relevance of something written in that age still astounds me.'  
'I'm really enjoying that I'm understanding everything that they're saying, because I was a bit scared!' – Audience members

'Amazing ideas and methods – wonderful to be active and do rather than sit and listen, as the children often do. Freeing.' – CPD Participant

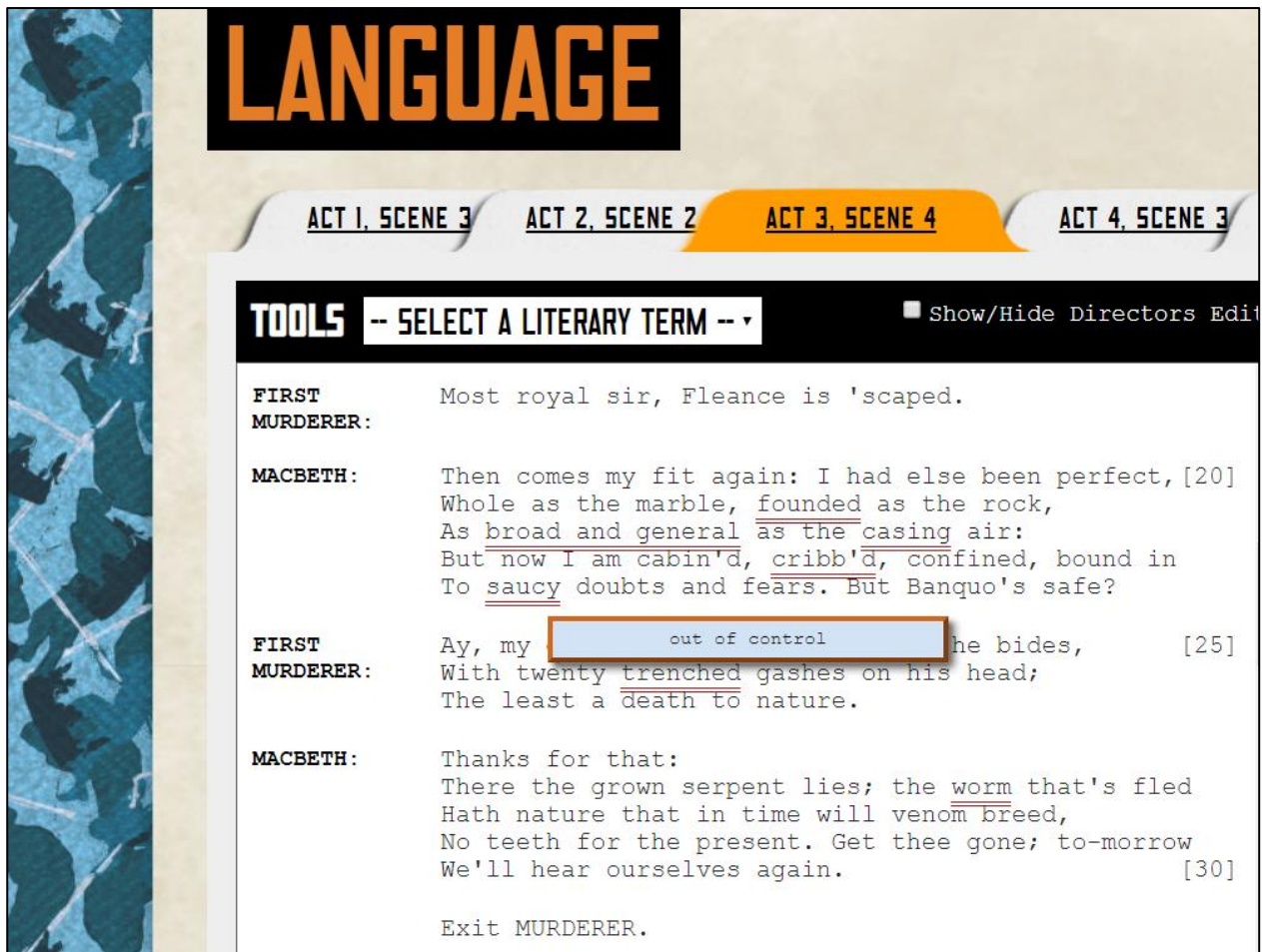
Each student should have a few sticky notes in two different colours. They should write down positive words and phrases about working with Shakespeare's language on notes of one colour and any words and phrases about the difficulties of working with Shakespeare's language on notes of the other colour. Students could then be asked to stand by the quotation they most agree/identify with. Take some feedback. Support the class in collating these into a simple table of two columns or in a slightly more advanced SWOT analysis table (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). Summarise key findings and stress that the approaches the class will be using are active and fun!

Taken from the KS3 language lesson plans for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:  
[teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-midsummer-language?previous=/library/teaching\\_level/key-stage-3-11-14yrs-6%3Fkeyword%3Dlanguage#tab315](https://teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-midsummer-language?previous=/library/teaching_level/key-stage-3-11-14yrs-6%3Fkeyword%3Dlanguage#tab315)

### Discussion point

Have you ever completed a SWOT analysis to inform your planning? Could it be a useful gauge?

## Script Machine tool



The screenshot displays the 'Script Machine' tool interface. At the top, the word 'LANGUAGE' is written in large, bold, orange letters. Below this, there are four tabs for different acts and scenes: 'ACT 1, SCENE 3', 'ACT 2, SCENE 2', 'ACT 3, SCENE 4' (which is highlighted in orange), and 'ACT 4, SCENE 3'. A 'TOOLS' menu is visible, with a dropdown arrow and the text '-- SELECT A LITERARY TERM --'. To the right of the menu, there is a checkbox labeled 'Show/Hide Directors Edit'. The main text area contains a script excerpt from Macbeth. The characters 'FIRST MURDERER' and 'MACBETH' are listed on the left. The text of the script is as follows:

FIRST MURDERER: Most royal sir, Fleance is 'scaped.

MACBETH: Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect, [20]  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

FIRST MURDERER: Ay, my out of control he bides, [25]  
With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
The least a death to nature.

MACBETH: Thanks for that:  
There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone; to-morrow  
We'll hear ourselves again. [30]

Exit MURDERER.

### Discussion point

How could selectively revealing the meaning of words support students' reading?



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## Tracing reoccurring motifs

Support students in close textual analysis of Shakespeare's language choices and their effects. Explain that certain ideas and images recur in a text and that this is one of the ways in which Shakespeare builds our impressions of character and develops themes.

Students should work in groups of three with each group assigned one of the following motifs. Each student should scour a section of Act 2 Scene 2 looking for evidence of where that particular motif is used:

- night and day
- the skies
- religious language
- danger and death
- nature
- change.

Students should then feedback to each other and highlight in the text the examples their other group members have found. Students can then reflect on the importance of that motif in this scene and prepare a few written sentences of feedback in the Student Booklet for the whole group.

Taken from the [KS4–5 lesson plans for Romeo and Juliet](#)

### Discussion point

How might this activity help students to understand less familiar vocabulary?

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# 19<sup>th</sup> century texts

‘Children who are better at inferring the meanings of new words from context will acquire the meanings of more words, through reading; and better vocabulary knowledge will support better reading comprehension...’

‘Children should be encouraged to try to work out the meaning of unknown words in a text by using the context to develop and test hypotheses about a word’s meaning. A rich discussion about different children’s hypotheses and justifications for these word meaning could ensue.’

Cain and Oakhill, *Oxford Language Report*, 2018

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## *The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth,* 2nd edition, ed. Mary Moorman, Oxford University Press, 1958, 1971

Dorothy Wordsworth lived with her brother, the poet William Wordsworth, in Cumbria. Her journal is a record of their daily lives and her observations of the natural world around her.

### The Grasmere Journals

#### Wednesday 14th

William did not rise till dinner time. I walked with Mrs C. I was ill **out of spirits** – disheartened. **Wm** and I took a long walk in the Rain.

#### Thursday 15th

It was a threatening misty morning – but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs Clarkson went a short way with us but turned back. The wind was furious and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large Boat-house, then under a furze Bush opposite Mr Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath; the Lake was rough. There was a Boat by itself floating in the middle of the Bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the Twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows – people working, a few primroses by the roadside, wood-sorrell flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry yellow flower which Mrs C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow, for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The Bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances and in the middle of the water like the sea.

(Source taken from the free *AQA GCSE English Language Paper 2 reading resource*)

### Task and discussion

1. Read the entry from Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>. How might a student use the context and surrounding words to work out the meaning of the two highlighted words/phrases?
2. Read the entry from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>. Which words and phrases might your students struggle with? Which surrounding words, phrases and context might your students use to work the meanings of these words out?
3. How do you encourage your students to feel confident in this process and their ability to apply it under exam conditions to unseen texts?

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# Contexts in question papers

Using unseen source information to support reading unknown vocabulary

## GCSE English Language – June 2019

### Paper 1

20th Century prose-fiction

***The Mill* by H E Bates – An extract from the beginning of a short story, published in 1935.**

This extract is from the beginning of a short story by H E Bates, set in the 1930s. Hartop and his wife own a van from which they sell produce to people in their local area, and their daughter, Alice, works with them.

### Paper 2

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction

***The Crossing* – An extract from James Cracknell and Ben Fogle’s autobiographical account of crossing the Atlantic, published in 2006**

In 2005, Ben Fogle and James Cracknell set off together in a seven week race across the Atlantic Ocean in a rowing boat called ‘Spirit’. In their book, *The Crossing*, Ben describes what happened one night as he rowed and James slept.

Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction

***Idle Days in Patagonia* – An extract from W H Hudson’s travel writing, published in 1893**

In 1893, William Hudson travelled by sea to Patagonia, a remote area in South America, to study birds. In his book, *Idle Days in Patagonia*, he describes the journey to get there.

## GCSE English Literature – June 2019

### Paper 2

#### Question 21.1

In *The Richest Poor Man in the Valley*, how does the poet present ideas about living a happy and contented life?

#### Question 21.2

In both *Nobody* and *The Richest Poor Man in the Valley* the poets describe ideas about how to live your life.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

#### Discussion

- How do your students use contextual information?
- How do you encourage students to use source context and question scaffolds not only to support their understanding of the wider text but to instil confidence when reading unknown or unfamiliar vocabulary during their exams?
- Do you teach this implicitly or explicitly? What are the ideas, tips or techniques you use?

## GCSE English Language – Paper 2, June 2019

### Excerpt from Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction

#### *Idle Days in Patagonia*

An extract from W H Hudson's travel writing, published in 1893

In 1893, William Hudson travelled by sea to Patagonia, a remote area in South America, to study birds. In his book *Idle Days in Patagonia*, he describes the journey to get there.

The wind had blown a gale all night, and I had been hourly expecting that the tumbling storm-shaken old steamship, in which I had taken passage to Patagonia, would turn over once and for all and settle down beneath the tremendous tumult of waters. For the groaning sound of its straining timbers, and the engine throbbing like an over-worked human heart, had made the ship seem like a living thing to me; and it was tired of the struggle, and under the tumult was peace. But at about three o' clock in the morning the wind began to drop and, taking off coat and boots, I threw myself in to my bunk for a little sleep.

Ours was a very curious boat, ancient and much damaged; long and narrow in shape, with the passengers' cabins ranged like a row of small wooden cottages on the deck; it was as ugly to look at as it was unsafe to voyage in. To make matters worse our Captain, a man over eighty years of age, was lying in his cabin sick; our one Mate was asleep, leaving only the men to navigate the steamship on that perilous coast, and in the darkest hour of a tempestuous night.



I was just dropping into a doze when a succession of bumps, accompanied by strange grating and grinding noises, and shuddering motions of the ship, caused me to start up again and rush to the cabin door. The night was still black and starless, with wind and rain, but for acres round us the sea was whiter than milk. I did not step out, as close to me, where our only lifeboat was fastened, three of the sailors were standing together talking in low tones. 'We are lost,' I heard one say; and another answer, 'Ay, lost forever!' Just then the Mate, roused from sleep, came running to them. 'What have you done?' he exclaimed sharply; then dropping his voice, he added, 'Lower the lifeboat – quick!'

#### Task and discussion

- Which words might your students have been unfamiliar or unsure of?
- How might the context, image and source information support their reading?

## Free source material available from our website

### GCSE English Language Paper 1 reading resource

Texts on this paper will be drawn from literary prose fiction from the 20th or 21st Centuries. These sources have been grouped for ease of use, but you will find overlaps between the groups. These suggested reading activities are suitable for both pair and group work.

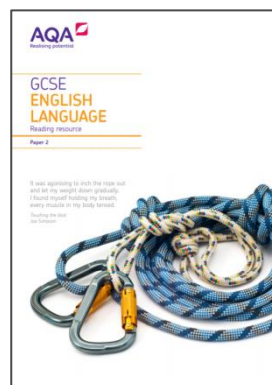
Download this resource from the 'Teaching' page of GCSE English Language, titled *Paper 1: Reading support booklet*  
[aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700/teaching-resources](https://aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700/teaching-resources)



### GCSE English Language Paper 2 reading resource

Texts on this paper will be drawn from non-fiction and literary non-fiction published in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The sample texts that follow have been grouped based on their subject matter to allow for comparison, and they illustrate the conventions of a variety of genres.

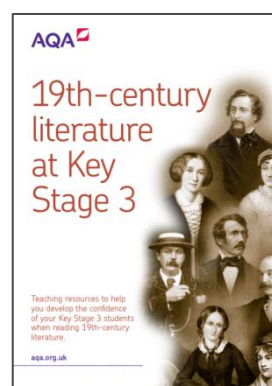
Download this resource from the 'Teaching' page of GCSE English Language, titled *Paper 2: Reading support booklet*  
[aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700/teaching-resources](https://aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700/teaching-resources)



### 19th-century literature at Key Stage 3

This is a resource to help you develop the confidence of your Key Stage 3 students when reading 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature. It will introduce skills that will be relevant to the study of literature at Key Stage 4 and help your students develop their understanding of contexts as well as some of the conventions established in literary genres.

Download this resource from the 'Teaching' page of GCSE English Literature, titled *Teaching guide: 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature at Key Stage 3*  
[aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702/teaching-resources](https://aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702/teaching-resources)



### High and medium frequency words list

This resource is designed to support the teaching and marking application of AO6 on the writing tasks for *Step Up to English*. These lists are editable to make them relevant for your students. They can also be used diagnostically to test a student's ability to recognise and spell each word.

Download this resource from the 'Teaching' page of *Step Up to English*:  
[filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-5970-SSV-HMFW.PDF](https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-5970-SSV-HMFW.PDF)

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# Other free resources

## Closing the word gap: activities for the classroom from Teachit in partnership with Oxford University Press

An extensive collection of simple, practical and engaging resources to help you close the word gap in your school and classroom. Currently available for secondary English, maths, science, geography and history.

If you're a senior manager, a SENDCo, a literacy leader, or any staff member with a special interest in literacy, you'll also find strategies and ideas for a whole-school policy.

Download it free:

[teachitenglish.co.uk/wordgap-activities](https://teachitenglish.co.uk/wordgap-activities)

## New free Teacher's Toolkits from the English and Media Centre and the British Library

Many of you love the British Library's *Discovering Literature* website but say you don't use it enough in the classroom. These two free Teacher's Toolkits were written by the English and Media Centre with the British Library Learning team. They show you how to make the most of the wealth of critical and contextual materials on *Discovering Literature*. One is specifically for *Macbeth*. The other is full of tips for teaching any text on the site.

You'll find all sorts of innovative ways of using primary sources, manuscripts and articles to:

- analyse authors' choices
- explore contexts
- engage with critics' ideas
- prompt debate
- inspire creativity
- promote independent research.

Download them free:

[bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-teachers-toolkit-macbeth](https://bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-teachers-toolkit-macbeth)

[bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-teachers-toolkit](https://bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-teachers-toolkit)

## Improving Literacy in Secondary schools from the Education Endowment Foundation

The EDF have seven recommendations of how to improve literacy in secondary schools. These are detailed in the Guidance report which is available to download for free from their website alongside a series of supporting resources (that includes support with vocabulary development).

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/improving-literacy-in-secondary-schools/>

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## The ERA licence from the Education Recording Agency

The ERA Licence enables schools, colleges and universities to make educational use of recordings of TV and Radio broadcasts.

In England, all schools are covered centrally by the Department for Education; independent schools are licenced individually.

The ERA website contains a whole host of resources to showcase how TV and radio broadcasts can be used in teaching.

Under the ERA Licence, you can:

- record, copy and retain TV and radio broadcasts belonging to our Members for non-commercial, educational use
- digitise pre-1989 analogue recordings
- embed whole programmes or clips into PowerPoint/VLEs
- use our Members' on-demand services (eg BBC iPlayer, All4, etc) and/or third-party services such as Box of Broadcasts (BoB), ClickView and Planet eStream to show programmes and clips to students.

For more information visit the website:

[era.org.uk](http://era.org.uk)

## Free sample Paper 2 'Source B' texts (19<sup>th</sup>-century literary non-fiction) from Faculty of English Language and Literature at Oxford University

It is not hard to find plentiful examples of 19<sup>th</sup>-century fiction to use as extracts in the classroom, but what about non-fiction?

To help teachers, members of the English Faculty at Oxford University have put together a corpus of free downloadable 19<sup>th</sup>-century texts as part of the *Diseases of Modern Life* project, supported by the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007-2013) under Grant Agreement Number 340121.

They've provided a range of sample 'Source B' texts (19<sup>th</sup>-century literary non-fiction) which fit within the research project's themes of Victorian scientific and medical culture on a range of topics including exercise, health, hygiene, and more.

These resources are designed to help students to become more familiar with 19<sup>th</sup>-century non-fiction and increase students' reading speed.

Download them free:

[english.ox.ac.uk/diseases-modern-life-resources](http://english.ox.ac.uk/diseases-modern-life-resources)



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# References and further reading

Quigley A, *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*, 2018

Former English teacher and Senior Associate at the Education Endowment Foundation  
[theconfidentteacher.com/category/closing-the-gap/](https://theconfidentteacher.com/category/closing-the-gap/)

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*Why Closing the Word Gap Matters: Oxford Language Report*, OUP, 2018

[global.oup.com/education/content/dictionaries/key-issues/word-gap/?region=uk](https://global.oup.com/education/content/dictionaries/key-issues/word-gap/?region=uk)

The Globe, *Teach Shakespeare*

[teach.shakespearesglobe.com/](https://teach.shakespearesglobe.com/)

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# Notes

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