



**Thomas Mills**  
High School & Sixth Form

The Key Stage 3 English curriculum at Thomas Mills High School is designed to foster a love of reading, writing, and spoken language while building the foundational knowledge and skills students need for success in Key Stage 3 and beyond. The curriculum is structured around three key areas:

**Substantive knowledge:** Students develop knowledge of literary genres, authorial techniques, and key themes across a range of texts, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. They explore how writers craft meaning and how texts reflect and shape the world around us.

**Ways of knowing:** Students learn how to analyse texts critically, identify literary devices, and construct well-supported interpretations. They are taught how to plan, draft, and edit their writing for a range of purposes and audiences, and how to speak and listen effectively in discussion and performance.

**Personal knowledge:** Students are encouraged to reflect on their own responses to texts and to consider how their experiences and perspectives influence their interpretations. They explore moral, social, and cultural issues through literature and are supported in developing their own voice as writers and speakers.

<b>Year 8</b>			
<b>Term</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Knowledge and Skills</b>	<b>Useful Links</b>
1	<b>Accelerated Reader Programme (on a rotation with Personal Development across the year)</b>	<b>Knowledge:</b>  <b>Students will continue to build knowledge about a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts through independent reading. They will encounter different genres, authors, and writing styles, which helps them develop a broad understanding of how stories and texts work.</b>	<a href="#">Accelerated Reader   Renaissance Learning</a>  Explanation video for parents: <a href="#">Accelerated Reader</a>  Suggestions of what to read next: <a href="#">Books &amp; Quizzes Archives   Renaissance Learning</a>



**They will learn about narrative elements like plot, character development, and theme, and see how these vary between books. They will also begin to recognise features of non-fiction such as headings, subheadings, and argument structure. Through regular reading and quizzes, students will develop awareness of how different authors engage readers and start to reflect on their own reading preferences and habits.**

**Skills:**

- Students will practise key reading comprehension skills such as retrieving information, summarising content, and identifying key details. They will also learn to make inferences—reading between the lines to understand characters' feelings, motives, and relationships.

They will strengthen their ability to explain and justify their opinions about what they've read, using evidence from the text.

- Regular quizzing on completed books helps develop focus, memory, and understanding of vocabulary.

Over time, students will become more confident, independent readers, better able to select appropriate books, reflect on their reading progress, and build a lifelong reading habit.

**Reimagine**



**Beyond Our World**

**Knowledge:**

**Students explore imaginative and speculative texts that take them beyond the boundaries of everyday life. This unit introduces a range of science fiction, fantasy, and dystopian extracts that challenge students to think about big ideas such as technology, the future, other worlds, and what it means to be human.**

**Students build knowledge of genre conventions—like world-building, futuristic settings, and moral dilemmas—and consider how writers use these elements to explore real-world concerns through fictional lenses.**

**The unit also encourages creative thinking and introduces key themes such as identity, freedom, control, and discovery.**

**Skills:**

- Students practise analysing how writers use language, structure, and narrative voice to create vivid, unfamiliar worlds and powerful atmospheres. They learn to identify techniques such as imagery, symbolism, and tone, and to consider how these shape the reader's understanding.
- In their own writing, students are encouraged to create imaginative pieces inspired by the themes and settings they've encountered, experimenting with style and description. They also reflect critically on how speculative fiction

Curated lists of age-appropriate sci-fi and fantasy books:

[Children's & Teenage Sci-Fi Books](#)

Creating settings and descriptive writing:

[Fiction writing - KS3 English - BBC Bitesize](#)

Useful videos:

Introduction

[Science Fiction for Kids | What is Science Fiction? |](#)

[Science Fiction Day | Twinkl USA](#)

[Fiction Book Genres - What Is Science Fiction](#)

Journey into Space with Nat Geo Kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrusgQ5JftA>



**Diverse Shorts**

can raise important questions about society and the future.

**Knowledge:**

**Students engage with powerful short stories that explore themes of inequality, resistance, and social transformation. The collection presents a variety of voices and experiences from across different cultures and communities, helping students build knowledge of how literature can reflect and respond to injustice. Through these thought-provoking narratives, students examine how characters experience and challenge oppression, and how authors use fiction to explore the dynamics of power, identity, and activism. The unit also provides historical and cultural context, encouraging students to see the connections between literature and real-world struggles for justice and equality.**

**Skills:**

- Students practise close reading to explore how language, voice, and structure contribute to meaning, and they consider how authors develop character and perspective to highlight social issues.
- The unit places a strong emphasis on discussion and personal response, encouraging students to make connections between texts and current

[♥ Read-Along with the Author | JUSTICE RISING | Brightly Storytime](#)

Introduces readers to themes of justice and change

Questions to promote deep thinking about the texts:  
[ds\\_critlitcards.pdf](#)



Reading Project

social debates. In writing, they produce analytical responses as well as creative work that engages with the themes of justice and change.

- This study helps students grow as thoughtful, socially aware readers and writers, capable of recognising the role literature can play in prompting reflection and inspiring action.

**Knowledge:**

**Students take ownership of their reading by selecting a book of their choice—fiction or non-fiction, from any genre or author—and engaging deeply with it. This independent reading experience allows students to develop a personal connection with literature and to explore themes, styles, and topics that interest them. The emphasis is on developing reading for pleasure, broadening literary horizons, and building confidence in responding to texts independently.**

**Skills:**

- Students develop speaking and listening skills by preparing and delivering a class presentation on their chosen book. This includes summarising key aspects of the text, sharing personal reflections, and explaining how the book made them think or feel.

Websites to help with reading choices:

LoveReading4Kids – [www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk](http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk)  
Books for Topics – [www.booksfortopics.com](http://www.booksfortopics.com)  
Common Sense Media –  
[www.common Sense Media.org](http://www.common Sense Media.org)

Websites to help with preparing a presentation:

[Giving a presentation - English - Learning with BBC Bitesize](#)  
[Scotland - English and Literacy - Listening and Talking - Giving a presentation - P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 - First and Second Level classroom and home learning for Curriculum for Excellence with BBC Bitesize Scotland - BBC Bitesize](#)



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students practise organising their ideas clearly, speaking fluently and expressively, and engaging their audience. They may use visual aids, props, or quotations to support their talk.</li> <li>• This unit helps students grow in confidence as communicators, develops their ability to reflect critically on reading, and encourages a culture of sharing and recommending literature within the classroom.</li> </ul>	
<b>Assessments</b>		<p>Regular STAR reader tests as part of Accelerated Reader programme to assess reading progress.          Comprehension task – pre 1900 extract          Diverse Shorts assessment – reading task          End of topic test – comprehension and creative writing extract – science fiction genre</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Poetry</b>	<p><b>Knowledge:</b></p> <p><b>Students deepen their understanding of poetry by exploring a range of poems linked by common themes, such as nature, identity, conflict, or relationships. This unit focuses on developing knowledge of how poets from different time periods and backgrounds use form, language, and structure to express ideas. Students learn to identify key poetic devices—such as metaphor, simile, personification, enjambment, and sound patterns—and begin to understand how these techniques work together to create mood, tone, and meaning. They also build awareness of poetic form,</b></p>	<p><b>Oak National Academy – KS3 Poetry Unit</b>          A structured series of <b>free video lessons</b>, worksheets, and quizzes covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification)</li> <li>• Imagery, rhyme, rhythm, and metre</li> <li>• Poetic structure and conventions  <a href="#">Oak National Academy Poetry Unit</a></li> </ul>



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	<p><b>Rhetoric</b></p>	<p><b>including sonnets, free verse, and narrative poetry, and consider how historical and cultural context shapes the poems' messages.</b></p> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The key skill in this unit is comparison. Students learn how to read two or more poems closely, identifying similarities and differences in content, language, and structure.</li><li>• They practise planning and writing comparative responses, using appropriate vocabulary to explain how different poets approach similar themes or use contrasting techniques. They are encouraged to make supported interpretations, explain the impact of poetic choices, and use evidence from both texts to justify their ideas.</li><li>• This unit helps students become more confident readers of poetry and prepares them for more detailed literary analysis at GCSE.</li></ul> <p><b>Knowledge:</b></p> <p><b>Students explore the power of language to persuade, influence, and inspire. They build knowledge of classical rhetorical techniques, including ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical argument), as well as devices such as repetition, rhetorical questions, parallel structure, and emotive language. By studying a range of speeches,</b></p>	<p><b>Oak National Academy – Introduction to Rhetoric (KS3)</b> A structured unit introducing the <b>Aristotelian triad</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ethos</b> (credibility)</li><li>• <b>Logos</b> (logic and evidence)</li><li>• <b>Pathos</b> (emotional appeal) Includes videos, quizzes, and downloadable</li></ul>
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	<p><b>History of the English Language</b></p>	<p><b>letters, and persuasive texts—from historical figures to modern voices—students begin to understand how rhetoric has been used to shape opinions, challenge injustice, and bring about change. They also consider the context in which these texts were created and how purpose and audience affect the writer’s choices.</b></p> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students learn to analyse how writers and speakers structure their arguments, choose language for impact, and use rhetorical devices to strengthen their message. They practise identifying these features in texts and explaining how they affect the reader or listener.</li> <li>• In their own writing, students plan and craft speeches or opinion pieces using persuasive strategies effectively and confidently. They are encouraged to express clear viewpoints, structure arguments logically, and choose language that suits their audience and purpose.</li> <li>• This unit helps students become more thoughtful, powerful communicators in both speech and writing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Knowledge:</b></p> <p><b>Students explore how English has evolved over time, with a particular focus on spoken language and how it</b></p>	<p>slides.</p> <p><a href="#">Introduction to Rhetoric – Oak National Academy</a></p> <p><b>Oak National Academy – Writing Rhetoric (KS3)</b> Builds on the introduction by applying rhetorical techniques to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinion articles</li> <li>• Speeches</li> <li>• Advertisements</li> </ul> <p>Students learn how to <b>structure persuasive writing</b> and <b>analyse rhetorical devices</b> in real-world texts.</p> <p><a href="#">Writing Rhetoric – Oak National Academy</a></p> <p><b>BBC Bitesize – English Language (KS3 &amp; GCSE)</b> Accent and dialect</p>
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		<p><b>reflects identity, culture, and change. Students build knowledge of key historical stages—such as Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, and contemporary English—and examine how invasions, trade, technology, and globalisation have shaped vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. They explore the variety and richness of spoken English today, including regional dialects, sociolects, and world English, and consider how language continues to change in response to social, cultural, and technological influences.</b></p> <p><b>Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students develop skills in linguistic observation, analysis, and comparison. They listen closely to a range of spoken examples—both historical and modern—and identify how sounds, forms, and meanings have shifted over time.</li> <li>• They explore how people adapt their speech in different contexts, and how accent and dialect can influence perceptions of identity and power.</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to reflect on their own language use and how it connects to where they're from, who they're speaking to, and what they want to achieve.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Accent and dialect guide for KS3 English students - BBC Bitesize</a></p> <p>Slang <a href="#">Slang guide for KS3 English students - BBC Bitesize</a></p> <p>Why does language change over time? <a href="#">Why does language change over time? - BBC Bitesize</a></p> <p><b>The Open University – The History of English in Ten Minutes</b> A humorous and informative animated video series summarising the development of English. <a href="#">The History of English in Ten Minutes   OpenLearn - Open University</a></p> <p><b>Oxford English Dictionary (OED) – Word Origins and Language Stories</b> Good website for deepening understanding of etymology and how language evolves. <a href="#">Word stories</a></p> <p>4. A tour of the UK and Ireland in accents – video <a href="#">A tour of The UK and Ireland in accents.</a></p>
<p><b>Assessments</b></p>	<p>Ongoing regular STAR reader tests as part of Accelerated Reader programme to assess reading progress. Book Talk presentation to class Language features and poetic devices test</p>		



		Poetry comparison task Rhetoric test – analysis and rhetorical writing test	
3	Romeo and Juliet	<p><b>Knowledge:</b></p> <p>Students are introduced to one of Shakespeare’s most famous tragedies. They build knowledge of the play’s key themes, such as love, fate, conflict, family, and loyalty, and explore how these ideas are presented through the plot, characters, and dramatic structure. Students learn about the conventions of tragedy and the features of Shakespearean drama, including the use of prologues, soliloquies, and dramatic irony. They also consider the historical and social context of Elizabethan England—particularly attitudes toward family honour, gender roles, and marriage—and how these shape the characters’ choices and the events of the play.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students practise reading Shakespearean language, identifying key techniques and understanding how meaning is conveyed through metaphor, rhythm, and wordplay.</li><li>• Students explore character development, motivations, and relationships, and examine how dramatic tension is created on stage. They are encouraged to express their own responses to the play, considering different interpretations</li></ul>	<p><b>BBC Bitesize – KS3 English: Romeo and Juliet</b> Offers scene summaries, character breakdowns, themes, and quizzes in a student-friendly format. <a href="#">Romeo and Juliet - KS3 English - BBC Bitesize</a></p> <p><b>Quizlet – Romeo and Juliet Flashcards</b> Great for memorising key quotes, characters, and plot points. <a href="#">Quizlet Flashcards [3]</a></p> <p><a href="#">3-Minute Shakespeare - Romeo and Juliet   Animated Shakespeare Summaries</a></p>



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		<p>and supporting their ideas with evidence from the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This unit also gives students opportunities to perform extracts, write critically about themes and characters, and reflect on the play's continuing relevance in the modern world.</li></ul>	
<b>Assessment</b>		<p>Ongoing regular STAR reader tests as part of Accelerated Reader programme to assess reading progress. Shakespeare terminology test Media texts – choice of creative tasks Shakespeare vocabulary and spelling test Drama conventions terminology test Romeo and Juliet extract comprehension task</p>	