

An Introduction to A-Level English Language

Welcome to English Language!

This pack contains a guide to a selection of activities and resources to help you to prepare for your start on the A-level in English Language in September. It is aimed to be used throughout the remainder of the summer term, and over the summer holidays to ensure you are ready to start your course in September. A wealth of materials from a great range of sources can be found here. Choose those that appeal to you, so you can start to engage with the world of English Language.

Prep Tip #1 - **English language-focused books**

If you are someone who likes to curl up with a book, here's some we recommend! They all closely connect to topics we study on the A-level and are aimed at interested members of the general public – a wide, diverse audience – so have been written with the purpose of entertaining as well as informing. Some of the authors are household names – you may know of Susie Dent, for example, from the tv programmes 'Countdown' and '8 out of 10 Cats Does Countdown'.



David Crystal appearing on *It's Only a Theory...*



...with Andy Hamilton and Reginald D. Hunter

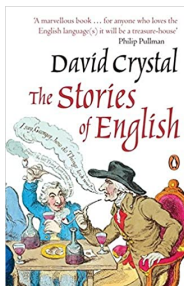


Susie Dent on *8 out of 10 Cats Does Countdown* with Rachel Riley and Jimmy Carr



Stephen Fry presenting *QI* with Alan Davies

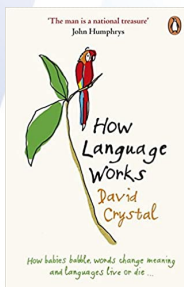
And here are their recommended books! Anything you read here that interests you will definitely be of use to you in class discussions and you may even end up quoting them in the exam, so enjoy a good read now in the knowledge you are accumulating useful context.



David Crystal's *The Stories of English*

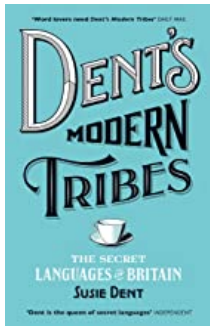
"When and why did 'thou' disappear from Standard English? Would a Victorian Cockney have said 'observation' or 'hobobservation'? Was Jane Austen making a mistake when she wrote 'Jenny and James are walked to Charmonth this afternoon'?"

This superbly well-informed - and also wonderfully entertaining - history of the English language answers all these questions, showing how the many strands of English (Standard English, dialect and slang among them) developed to create the richly-varied language of today."



David Crystal's *How Language Works*

"In this fascinating survey of everything from how sounds become speech to how names work, David Crystal answers every question you might ever have had about the nuts and bolts of language in his usual highly illuminating way. Along the way we find out about eyebrow flashes, whistling languages, how parents teach their children to speak, how politeness travels across languages and how the way we talk show not just how old we are but where we're from and even who we want to be."



Susie Dent's *Modern Tribes - The Secret Languages of Britain* (Psst: an extract of this book appeared in the 2019 AS English Language exam)

“Ever wondered why football managers all speak the same way, what a cabbie calls the Houses of Parliament, or how ticket inspectors discreetly request back-up? We are surrounded by hundreds of tribes, each speaking their own distinct slang of colourful words, jokes and phrases, honed through years of conversations on the battlefield, in A&E, backstage, or at ten-thousand feet in the air.

Susie Dent has spent years interviewing hundreds of professionals, hobbyists and enthusiasts, and the result is an idiosyncratic phrasebook like no other. From the Freemason's handshake to the publican's banter, *Dent's Modern Tribes* takes us on a whirlwind tour of Britain, decoding its secret languages and, in the process, finds out what really makes us all tick.”



Stephen Fry's *Fry's English Delight*. The edition shown is from series 5. The books are based on Fry's radio series and are also available as audio books.

“A fifth series from BBC Radio 4 in which Stephen Fry examines, with the help of experts, the highways and byways of the English language. In these four episodes he tells The Story of X: a letter holy and profane, sexy and chaste; discusses intonation, the "song" of English and how cadence affects meaning; muses on the art and craft of conversation - and whether true conversation can happen on TV and radio - and ponders the meaning of meaning, and the gap between brain and mouth that means language can never truly represent thought. In addition, he tells us why blue as a colour is a newish invention.”

There are numerous books that you could read. Look up the AQA recommended reading list for this subject; have a cruise through recommendations online. Pick any that takes your fancy - write a short book review on it, hand this to me in September and (if you are happy for me to (you can be an anon. reviewer if you like!)) I'll put it on our class noticeboard.

Prep Tip #2 - English Language talks

Download the TED talk app to your phone or device. It's PERFECT for something to watch whilst you have a cuppa, or are waiting for the rice to cook. They are always entertaining and it's great to hear a leading expert in their field give you their insight in a concise, audience-friendly way.



Relates to our topic of the impact of technology of English Language: John McWhorter's 'txtng is killing language jk'

"Linguist John McWhorter thinks about language in relation to race, politics and our shared cultural history. 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."

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



Relates to our topic on attitudes towards accent: Safwat Saleem's 'Why I keep speaking up even when people mock my accent'

"Artist Safwat Saleem grew up with a stutter -- but as an independent animator, he decided to do his own voiceovers to give life to his characters. When YouTube commenters started mocking his Pakistani accent, it crushed him, and his voice began to leave his work. Hear how this TED Fellow reclaimed his voice and confidence in this charming, thoughtful talk."

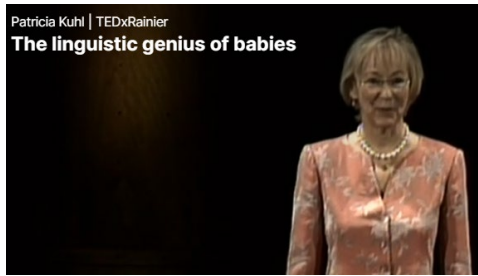
https://www.ted.com/talks/safwat_saleem_why_i_keep_speaking_up_even_when_people_mock_my_accent



Relates to our topic on language change: Erin McKean's 'The Joy of Lexicography'

"Is the beloved paper dictionary doomed to extinction? In this infectiously exuberant talk, leading lexicographer Erin McKean looks at the many ways today's print dictionary is poised for transformation."

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



Relates to our topic on child language acquisition: Patricia Kuhl's "The linguistic genius of babies'

"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."

https://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies?language=en#t-2602

Prep Tip #3 – English Language figures

Many of the people who write regularly about English Language issues are also the people called upon to set A-level exam English Language papers... a strong reason to follow them on social media, and keep tabs on what they think you'll find interesting – it may end up in your final exam!

Their articles and tweets make fascinating, real-time connections between all of the different topics we study and what is making the headlines in media both nationally and globally, week-to-week; you'll see, for example, Dan Clayton dissecting the use of modals by politicians to direct how the public respond to Covid 19 actions, or Sue Fox and Jenny Cheshire discussing how important linguistics is in shaping the Black Lives Matter movement for social justice.

Blogs

Linguistics Research Digest - a blog by Sue Fox and Jenny Cheshire at QMU covering latest linguistics research <http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.com/>

EngLangBlog – a blog for a-level English Language students and their teachers <https://englishlangsfx.blogspot.com/>

Johnson - the Economist magazine's correspondents consider the use and abuse of languages around the world, in a blog named after the dictionary-maker Samuel Johnson <https://www.economist.com/johnson/>

twitter



EngLangBlog
@EngLangBlog

Keeping you up to date with #EngLang stories in the news. Aimed at students & teachers of AQA English Language A & AS level.

📍 all over the place [🔗 englishlangsfx.blogspot.co.uk](http://englishlangsfx.blogspot.co.uk) 📅 Joined October 2012

Following



Language Log
@LanguageLog

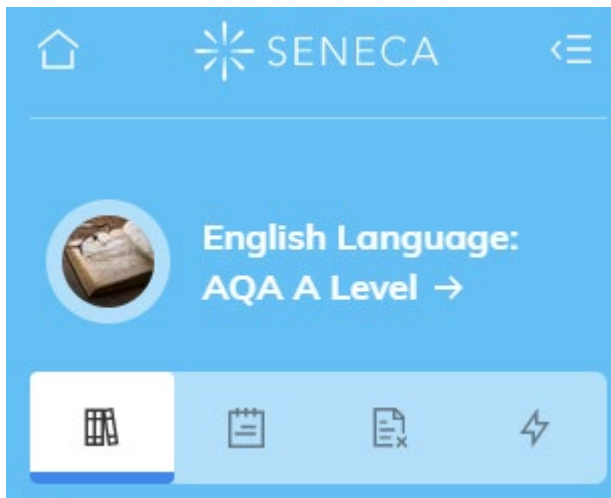
Language Log is a group blog on language and linguistics started in the summer of 2003 by Mark Liberman and Geoffrey Pullum.

Follow

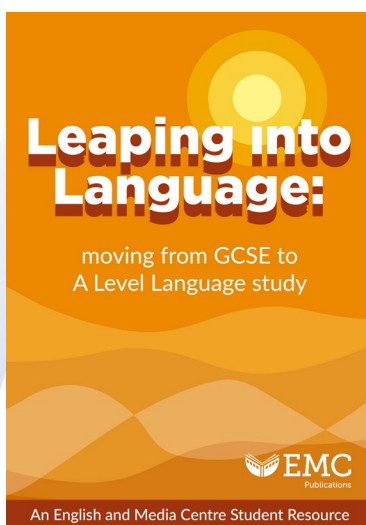
Prep Tip #4 – English Language mini-courses

Here are links to two fabulous mini courses, helping you to not only transition GCSE to A-level but to actually get really comfortable with key areas of the AQA A-level specification. Your future self will definitely thank you for doing these, and my current students love the Seneca course which is completely interactive with bite-size info and quick mini-quizzes.

There're all sorts of weird and wonderful topics in English Language – have fun getting a taste of them now, and I'm looking forward to meeting you soon!



<https://app.senecalearning.com/classroom/course/1e248169-fb0c-4ca7-9692-7c46f316728b/section/dc6a661b-5e5f-4484-9d25-15441bd95cae/section-overview>



<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/leaping-into-language-from-gcse-to-a-level-english-language-study>