

Literature and Performance

I. Course description and aims

Literature and performance is an interdisciplinary synthesis of literature and theatre. It brings together literary analysis, based on close reading, critical writing and discussion, with practical and aesthetic elements of theatre. In this course students engage with a range of literary works, perform dramatic texts, and transform texts into realized performances. The course is grounded in knowledge, skills and processes associated with the individual disciplines, while developing interdisciplinary understandings generated from the interactions between literature and performance. Literature and performance is only available as standard level (SL) course.

Literature and performance is one of the three Diploma Programme (DP) courses grounded in the study of language and literature. Expectations of language usage, level of analysis, and of critical reflection are the same across the three studies in language and literature courses. Yet literature and performance is unique in that it asks students to integrate understandings from two disciplines to develop further insight and create products that would not be possible within the single disciplines alone. Investigating a literary text through performance provides students with a unique perspective of the text; likewise, grounding a theatrical performance in literary understanding provides students with deeper sensitivity to the process of theatre-making.

As an interdisciplinary course, literature and performance shares the course aims of both studies in language and literature and arts subjects:

The aims of all subjects in studies in language and literature are to enable students to:

1. engage with a range of texts, in a variety of media and forms, from different periods, styles, and cultures
2. develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, presenting and performing
3. develop skills in interpretation, analysis and evaluation
4. develop sensitivity to the formal and aesthetic qualities of texts and an appreciation of how they contribute to diverse responses and open up multiple meanings
5. develop an understanding of relationships between texts and a variety of perspectives, cultural contexts, and local and global issues, and an appreciation of how they contribute to diverse responses and open up multiple meanings
6. develop an understanding of the relationships between studies in language and literature and other disciplines
7. communicate and collaborate in a confident and creative way
8. foster a lifelong interest in and enjoyment of language and literature.

The aims of all subjects in the arts are to enable students to:

1. explore the diversity of the arts across time, cultures and contexts
2. develop as imaginative and skilled creators and collaborators
3. express ideas creatively with competence in forms appropriate to the artistic discipline
4. critically reflect on the process of creating and experiencing the arts
5. develop as informed, perceptive and analytical practitioners
6. enjoy lifelong engagement with the arts.

II. Curriculum model overview

Each of the areas of exploration referred to below acts as a critical lens for students and teachers to study literary texts and their performance. The areas of exploration are intended as overlapping ways of approaching texts and performances.

Readers, writers and texts

This area of exploration introduces students to the nature of literature, its study and its performance. It encourages students to explore the choices made by authors and the way meaning is created. The study also focuses on the impact the literature has on the student and the role readers and audiences play in generating meaning. It encourages students to move from a personal response to an understanding and interpretation that is influenced by the community of readers, and audience members, of which they are a part.

Time and space

This area of exploration focuses on the idea that literary texts and performances are neither created nor received in a vacuum. It explores the variety of contexts in which texts are written, read and performed across time and space as well as the ways literature and performance mirror the world at large. Students examine how cultural conditions can shape the writing and staging of a literary text, how literature and performance can reflect or refract cultural conditions, and the ways culture and identity influence reception.

Intertextuality: connecting texts

This area of exploration focuses on the connections between and among diverse texts, traditions, creators, ideas, and forms. Literature and performance asks students to examine and develop connections between written and performed texts. It encourages the comparative study of different written and performed texts so that students may gain deeper appreciation of their unique characteristics as well as complex systems of connection.