

ENGLISH CURRICULUM RESOURCE LINKS AND MAPS

English departments in UK schools need to reshape the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 curricula to address issues of diversity and inclusivity. According to prof. Becky Francis, the chair of 2025 Curriculum and Assessment Review, ‘many aspects of the current system are working well, however there are issues with the shape and content of the curriculum.’ Also, the Curriculum Review (2025) emphasises the need for the curriculum ‘to do more in ensuring that all young people feel represented, and that it successfully delivers the duties to support equality of opportunity and challenge discrimination.’

Billy Waters: Songs from the Shadows aims to address these needs by introducing a new graphic novel and a sonic resource into the curriculum. These resources can reframe and reform both GCSE English Language and Literature by incorporating a diverse text that reflects major themes such as revolution, war, health, and class. By engaging students with Billy Waters’ compelling story, we not only align with Curriculum recommendations to ‘remain relevant and up to date while embedding and recognising the importance of cultural knowledge stemming from the past’ but also to broaden horizons by situating learning in diverse contexts and ensuring that ‘young people see meaningful representations of themselves in what they learn, as well as encountering and recognising the perspectives of others’ (Curriculum Review 2025).

KS3 Curriculum Maps for Billy Waters can include:

Subject Content

- Supports ‘the need to preserve key stage 3 as an educational stage with a broad and balanced curriculum that encompasses a rich variety of subjects.’ (Curriculum Review 2025)
- Provides opportunities to address key literary concepts within the confines of a single life story, analysing themes, characterisation, and narrative techniques presented in Billy Waters' narrative.

Skill Development

- Helps a depth of knowledge regarding the context of race and aspects of nineteenth-century society ‘to understand the ways in which race and racisms work in society, and

to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to implement that understanding in teaching practice' (Runnymede: Intelligence for a Multi-ethnic Britain 2020).

- Supports student engagement, alongside empathy and understanding of others.

Enquiry Questions that address:

- Storytelling (How can we tell stories that effectively convey important themes and experiences?)
- Including Marginalised Voices (In what ways can we include and highlight marginalised voices in literary texts?)
- Integrating Historical Context (How can we integrate historical contexts into the classroom to enhance our understanding of literature?)

Topics that cover:

- Themes of Race and Racism
 - Exploration of racial discrimination: Understanding how race and racism are depicted in literature.
 - Historical attitudes: Examining societal views on race in 19th-century Britain.
 - Relevance to modern society: Discussing how these themes relate to contemporary issues.
- Representation of Disability
 - Portrayal of disability: Analysing how disabled characters are represented in literature.
 - Challenges and perceptions: Exploring the societal attitudes towards disability during the 1800s and today.
 - Empathy and understanding: Encouraging empathy by examining Billy Waters' experiences.
- Social Injustice and Marginalisation
 - Impact of poverty and class: Investigating how social class affects individuals and communities.
 - Representation of marginalised voices: Highlighting stories of those often overlooked in literature.
 - Critique of societal structures: Discussing how literature can expose and challenge injustices.

Among the GCSE set texts across all exam boards that *Billy Waters: Songs from the Shadows* can fit with are:

- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens: AQA, Edexcel, Eduqas, WJec, OCR
- *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens: AQA, Edexcel, OCR
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley: AQA, Edexcel (also A Level)
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë: AQA, Edexcel, OCR, Eduqas
- *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson: AQA, Edexcel, OCR, Eduqas

More specifically Pearson Edexcel GCSE English texts that relate to themes of race, injustice, disability, and social exclusion, similar to the story of Billy Waters, include:

(<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/english-literature-2015.html>)

- *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne – explores injustice and the impact of historical events on individuals.
- *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo – speaks to war, social class, and injustice.
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck – addresses marginalisation, disability, and the pursuit of dreams.

WJEC Eduqas GCSE English Literature (Post-1914 Prose/Drama):

(https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/english-literature-gcse/#tab_keydocuments)

- *Anita and Me* by Meera Syal – focuses on race and social exclusion.
- *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney – examines poverty and class issues.
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Simon Stephens – highlights disability and perception.
- Poetry:
 - ‘London’ by William Blake – urban poverty and social injustice.
 - ‘Disabled’ by Wilfred Owen – war injury and disability.

OCR GCSE English Literature (19th-century Prose/Drama):

(<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/english-literature-j352-from-2015/>)

- *Great Expectations* and *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens – explores marginalisation and societal prejudice and augmenting knowledge of 19th century London.
- *Leave Taking* by Winsome Pinnock – delves into racial identity and discrimination.
- Poetry Anthology:
‘*Half-Caste*’ by John Agard and ‘*No Problem*’ by Benjamin Zephaniah – address race and identity.

AQA GCSE English Literature resources:

(<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-8702/specification>)

- Novels like *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley – themes of social exclusion and otherness.
- Poetry Anthology:
 - ‘*Checking Out Me History*’ by John Agard